

Implementing the measurement of modern service delivery mechanisms in a selected range of English councils

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ABSTRACT

This research provides the first thorough investigation into, and analysis of, the literature on e-government metrics and has opened up the topic and literature to the practitioner community.

The research focuses on English local government, in response to what the researcher had experienced as haphazard implementation of e-government. Supplementary explorations included official and unofficial reasons for the adoption of e-government, along with the role of politics and Politics – local, national and international.

Until this research, the main focus for e-government measurement had been on targets or large and complex analyses suitable only for central government. Instead, this research proposes parsimonious measurement. Such measurement, reliant upon collating citizen feedback across delivery channels, will assist improvement to services and assist channel migration. This had never been examined before.

Since the subject of the research was electronic government, an action research methodology was employed, using electronic research instruments to deliver surveys, provide survey results and to house research models and background. The researcher is a practitioner within the field, so the instruments were designed to cross-fertilize the academic and practitioner thinking on the subject.

It is expected that the research tool, in the form of the weblog, will continue (in the longer term) to assist professionals in debating the use of metrics. Ongoing research will continue to stretch across the academic and practitioner boundaries.

This research makes original contributions to knowledge by revealing the most appropriate mechanism for the management and use of e-government, amongst other mechanisms for service delivery in the public sector, especially considering smaller authorities.

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CHAPTER 1 – RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1. Introduction

As Maeijer & Zouridis (2004, p.2) observed “E-government has put a spell on public administration from Singapore to Uruguay and from the United States to Hong Kong”. Winner (2005, p.124) says something quite similar.

“The building of canals, railroads, factories, and electrical power plants as well as the introduction of the telegraph, telephone, automobile, airplane, radio, television and other instruments of modern society have all been accompanied by enthusiastic proclamations that the innovation would give ordinary folks greater access to resources, more power over key decisions and broader opportunities for political involvement.”

The researcher believes this to have been the case, to some extent, with modern mechanisms of service delivery, such as electronic government; and whilst some of the developments named by Winner might have affected political involvement, it was not considered by the researcher that this was the case with e-government. The sentiment is also supported by Dunleavy et al (2006, p.474) where they state “However, with any public sector management reform agenda, it is normal for initially hyped changes, in which high hopes and political capital are invested, to prove more patchy in securing substantial improvements than anticipated”.

The aim of this research is to investigate the development of modern mechanisms of service delivery, such as those labelled electronic government, particularly in the context of English local government, and establish:

- whether successful or appropriate implementation has occurred or is taking place
- whether metrics have been used to guide the process and how
- what and how metrics can be established along the implementation route map and whether they are appropriate

It was always anticipated that this would imply coincidental explorations that would include:

- the reasons for the adoption of electronic government, official and unofficial
- the role of politics and Politics – local, national and international

due to the effect these may have on the adoption, use or choice of metrics. These aims are further developed in Section 2.8. Key research questions.

The thesis has a structure that follows from the initial investigations and the broad area of research this indicated, then came the detailed literature review and the research questions resulting and the investigation of possible methodologies to assist in approaching the research questions. The chapters following outline the subsequent phases of research employed leading to a discussion of both the theory and practice involved and then the conclusions, indicating lessons learned, the contribution to knowledge, possible future research directions, along with possible alternative explanations, the limitations discovered and implications for practitioners. The annexes include examples of the research instruments, more important comments received during different phases and abstracts from papers published.

1.2. Motivation

During 2000 extensive research for an MA dissertation was carried out on “Service Delivery using Internet Technologies – A Study of English District Councils”, (Phythian & Taylor, 2000). This research builds on that previous work by the author.

Employed as an ICT Manager in a small district council, the researcher also held responsibility for e-government in the authority and associated

relationships with any partners, along with sitting on a regional e-government partnership body for a number of years and as such became aware of the progress of e-government across a large geographical area, covering differing and different types of authority. The researcher is also active within the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm), the local government ICT managers' body, at both regional and national levels.

There appeared to have been little solid academic research in the area of e-government over the recent period, although much more than when the researcher wrote a Master's dissertation, and there has been no analysis of whether the large sums of money spent have truly been worth it or whether the public are getting a better service.

It is this researcher's opinion that the inability to find what he considers to be a politically unfettered analysis of the years from 2000 to 2006, having spoken with colleagues, consultants and politicians across the country, was sufficient encouragement to investigate what has happened, what has happened successfully in some places and what guidance can be provided to ensure that the public benefit from electronic government, transformational government or whatever fashion is in vogue.

1.3. Definitions

To be clear what modern mechanisms of service delivery refer to, particularly in the context of government, it is first necessary to examine what they might be and how different definitions of electronic government might affect their delivery, or how they can be measured.

Government services, as with those from the private sector, have been traditionally delivered face-to-face, through the postal system, or more recently

over the telephone. With the advent of developments in technology such as the personal computer and Internet, this brought the World Wide Web and electronic mail into increasing use amongst the general public. These modern mechanisms of service delivery were also promoted for use by government, particularly by suppliers, for dealing with the public. Governments had for a long time been users of information & communication technology (ICT)¹ in the back offices, but as with businesses who by employing the Internet created the phrase 'electronic commerce' or 'e-commerce', the use by government of similar technology introduced the equivalent term of 'electronic government'. Other modern mechanisms of service delivery include the use of telephone call centres, where ICT is employed to assist call handling when the public contact via telephone, along with the use of 'digital television' and also the 'Short Message Service' (SMS) available over the mobile telephone network.

The term 'electronic government', 'e-government', or 'eGovernment' has been in use since the middle of the 1990's and in the first decade of the new millennium started to be replaced by 'T-government' (transformational) or 'M-government' (mobile) which may be in the way of a refresh or reinvention of terminology, as much as a change in actual practice. According to Organ (2006, p.1) the first use of the term 'e-government' in the British Parliament occurred in April 1998.

The issue with defining e-government was highlighted by Lihua & Zheng (2005, p.1655), who proposed, that "There is no uniform definition about e-government performance". More recently, Schellong (2009, p.16) considered that "there is still no commonly accepted definition of eGovernment".

One definition from the UK Parliament (2002) states that

¹ The expression 'ICT' referring to Information & Communications Technology has been employed throughout rather than Information Technology (IT). However direct quotations may still employ that of 'IT'

“Electronic or e-government is about providing public access via the Internet to information about all the services offered by central government departments and their agencies; and enabling the public to carry out transactions for all those services, for example paying tax, claiming and receiving benefits and getting a passport.”

This focuses entirely on the Internet and central government, with no view as to quality of service or local and regional government.

The World Bank (2007) provides a helpful definition of e-government:

“‘E-Government’ refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions.

Traditionally, the interaction between a citizen or business and a government agency took place in a government office. With emerging information and communication technologies it is possible to locate service centers closer to the clients. Such centers may consist of an unattended kiosk in the government agency, a service kiosk located close to the client, or the use of a personal computer in the home or office.”

Jansen (2005, p.2-3) having asked the question “is it possible to agree upon a common definition of e-government?” presents a useful investigation into finding a definition of e-government and having considered a number of definitions believes that many are politically motivated, value-laden and hence believes not always commensurable. He then proceeds to split e-government up into three components: e-democracy, e-service and e-administration. In my view, this brings in additional complexity since the quality of each underpins that of the whole. In contrast, Saxena (2005, p.500) relies on a definition of e-governance

to encompass both e-democracy and e-government, which may have some value but is in contrast to those from the World Bank (2007) and Janssen (2005).

In the government literature there is a definition of 'local e-government' in DTLR (2002, p.2):

“e-Government means exploiting the power of information and communications technology to help transform the accessibility, quality and cost-effectiveness of public service and to help revitalise the relationship between customers and citizens and the public bodies who work on their behalf.”

Which although potentially value-laden with terms such as “exploiting”, is non-specific regarding channel mechanism and does consider transformation. It also presumes specific advantages such as cost-effectiveness, accessibility and the development of the government/customer relationship. However, in a Canadian report by Roy (2006, p.x), he further refines 'e-government' as “The continuous innovation in the delivery of services, citizen participation, and governance through the transformation of external and internal relationships by the use of information technology, especially the Internet”. This is, in many ways, an aspirational definition but it describes what was and is still ultimately intended from e-government by many proponents.

In the actual context of this research, it is the Roy (2006) definition of e-government which will be used. It describes more than just the provision of web sites, as is assumed by some researchers, such as Gil-Garcia et al (2005, p.20) who make this assumption throughout. The reason why the research employs the term of 'modern mechanisms of service delivery' is that e-government frequently employs call centres using Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, digital television or SMS, side-by-side with web sites and electronic mail to deliver services.

For the purposes of further clarification towards a definition, the different relationships dealt with by e-government are commonly labelled 'g2c' for government to citizen, 'g2b' for government to business and 'g2g' for government to government. In the development of electronic government, different countries have taken different approaches as to which route to prioritise but g2c is the one which will be most noticeable in western countries. A further relationship label is provided by Lofstedt (2005) in the form of 'g2e' for government to employee. In fact, e-government is probably a set of additional "tools" that can be employed as "detectors" and "effectors", as outlined by Hood & Margetts (2007, p.3), along with being employed "actively" or "passively", as suited to those in power but becoming (p.179) "a pathway to several kinds of bureaucratic salvation". Whilst they ascribe such thinking as long standing with a history of at least a hundred and fifty years, they conclude (p.183) that "it is only by applying technology-neutral analytic frameworks [...] that we can see precisely what alters when technology changes".

In Cornford (2006, p.14) e-government initiatives have been classified as four types:

- Single Agency Single Service Initiatives e.g. online one by one
- Single Agency Multiple Initiatives e.g. classic local authority CRM systems
- Multiple-Agency Single Service Initiatives e.g. classic shared service centre
- Multiple-Agency Multi Service Initiatives e.g. support environment for Childrens' Plans

Examples of all types of initiative are available but according to that author's research, emphasis or priority has shifted over time from the first, through the third, back to the second and onto the fourth. Thus demonstrating the changing operational context. There is some overlap between the 'relationship' and the

'initiative', as discussed above, but essentially 'initiatives' may be seen as back office solutions whereas the 'relationship' is outward focused, even when between government departments.

Following criticism of the use of e-government to-date, Gupta & Panzardi (2009, p.26) of the World Bank develop a broader definition of the term.

“the transformative use of technology and networks to support the use of authority and power in a country (at all levels) not only through enabling rules, capacities, processes, behaviours, institutions, and traditions, but also transnationally and globally, involving various actors and mechanism including individuals, as well as formal and informal institutions and entities.”

During the e-government era, there also came a phase of calling for 'transformational government'. In fact 'transformational government', according to Hogge (2008, p.48), has its origins in a speech by the then Prime Minister, Blair (2002), whom she describes as “that famous techno-illiterate”, in which he used the word 'transform' on four occasions to describe information technology as the catalyst for both public service and business improvement. However it may also be related back to a publication, Jones & Crowe (2001, p. 72), from Demos, the UK think-tank which was then linked to New Labour, entitled “Transformation not automation – the e-government challenge”, which had in the eleventh of a fifteen point summary the sensible concept that “Target-setting should shift towards a longer term focus on outcomes, rather than creating short term incentives to automate existing forms of government transaction without changing their basic nature”, which only became policy rather later. Transformation in management terms has an earlier focus within the organizational psychology promoted by Deming (1996) and underlined by his System of Profound Knowledge, outlined in Daszko & Sheinberg (2005, p.2) where they state that “Transformation is what happens when people see the world through a new lens of knowledge and are able to create an infrastructure, never before envisioned”. This was emphasised by Kanter (2001) who stated:

“A company is not transformed just because it creates a Web site. Success requires a more complete makeover. It requires rethinking the way the work of the whole organization is organized. It requires challenging assumptions about customers, internal and external communications, decision making, operating style, managerial behaviour, employee motivation and retention – and then defining a new way. And ultimately that’s not a technological problem. It’s a human one.”

In considering “transformational” government versus a “transactional” one, there may be a need to contemplate the philosophical debate led by Karl Popper as described in Ambruster & Gebert (2002, p.171) where they outline “a social technology of small steps” operating under “the principle of permanent elimination of errors: the method of permanently searching for mistakes and inaccuracies in order to correct them early on.” This is not unlike the principles of “lean” and “systems” thinking, that are discussed in Section 2.4. The marketization of citizenship.

From an earlier (1978) and entirely different approach, James McGregor Burns is described as defining leadership in “transformational” versus “transactional” terms (Fairholm 2001, p2). Transformational leaders engage with others raising “one another to higher levels of motivation and morality”, whilst the transactional leader “focuses mainly on rewards or punishments in exchange for performance”. Perhaps this describes the societal culture that was being sought.

It was also recognised by a joint Parliamentary and industry body, EURIM (2008, p.7) who recommended that there was a need to “identify and praise good practice, ensuring that transformation leads to better services, not just cost-savings within silos”. However, Saxby (2006, p.1) reports a speaker at the Ministerial eGovernment Conference in 2005 as stating that “I’m bored with eGovernment. There’s so much bad eGovernment around and it has made things worse. If we don’t learn the lessons we will carry our mistakes into the

transformation era". This is perhaps what was meant by Gasco (2003, p.13) when she states that:

"Building a virtual state is more than building a web site, more than improving public management. It is about the process of state reform. Therefore, it is more than studying organizational change and government modernization. It is about analyzing institutional transformation."

It is also important to appreciate the increasing awareness of the "true vocation" of e-government as described by Roy (2006, p.7):

"The emergence of more digital and online mechanisms for service delivery must be situated within a broader movement of citizen-centric governance within which online channels are more likely to coexist with, rather than replace, other forms of communication and transaction. The movement is central to understanding e-government's evolution from a primarily cost-savings technique toward a broader vehicle for both organizational and managerial renewal."

This was reinforced by that author's own empirical research, Roy, (2006, p.297 note 4) notes that:

"The experience of the Canadian banking sector, as a leader in developing online capacities, is instructive: after several years of growth since its inception in 1997, surveys in March 2005 suggested a levelling off of online users at roughly thirty percent of the population, down slightly from thirty-three percent in 2004."

In the UK, research by Ofcom (2009, p.4) confirmed the need for all citizen channels to be preserved:

"A recurring theme throughout this research was a desire for traditional channels to be preserved, particularly for those without access to, or confidence to use, the internet. Even those who are most favourable about using the internet for citizen participation see a continuing role for traditional channels. "

This public antipathy to the delivery mechanism had been concluded by Pitt et al (1995, p.183) when they stated that "Users expect efficient and effective

delivery systems. However, for the user, the goal is not the delivery system, but rather the information it can provide”.

Ho (2002, p.435) proposed that “the flexibility of the Internet in providing access to goods, services, and information raises citizens’ expectations of customer service in a range of contexts including interactions with government”. In contrast, however, Borins (2007, p.22) reminds us that much of the e-government literature has made two assumptions. The first is that the availability of electronic government means that it will be used, the second that the provision of information by government electronically is of lesser value than the provision of transactions. The first has probably been proven by the actual delay in take-up that has prompted the move to transformational government. The second is shown by the fact that government has vast amounts of information that is frequently in demand by the public and the need to provide this in the public domain is equal to, if not more important than, the provision of transactions. This is confirmed by Bannister (2007, p. 181) where he states:

“People look for information all the time. Moore et al (2005), argue that e-government resources should therefore be first put into making the design and content quality of web sites as high as possible. Instead they say, governments pour money into complex and infrequently used transaction systems while information access is given little or no attention.”

As a foundation, Deming (1986, p.6) reminds us of the purpose of government service:

“In most governmental services, there is no market to capture. In place of capture of the market, a government agency should deliver economically the service prescribed by law or regulation. The aim should be distinction in service.”

Foley (2008, p.12) identified a “sizeable segment of the online population who are not yet convinced of the benefit of using government web sites”, along with a strong variance (Foley 2008, p.7), in the level of sophistication of activity between those willing to obtain information (90%), book appointments (75%)

and make payments online (60%). Hence electronic channels have their own constraints to citizens. This view was taken further by Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley (2007, p. 74), who concluded that:

“If e-government services are to be citizen-centric and widely used, they must clearly be designed for the benefit of citizens, rather than simply for cost-cutting purposes. Many citizens, perhaps especially the old and the vulnerable, may not embrace ‘modernisation’ as eagerly as governments. ‘Transformational government’ may, therefore, be a step too far for the majority of the public at this time. In our view, the emphasis should shift now to improving the functionality and quality of the existing online services and building up customer support for G2C e-service users – particularly the first-time or the uncertain user.”

Therefore, inclusivity needs to be managed as part of the process. The views on this within the literature and its relationship to this research are examined in Section 2.5. Digital inclusion and exclusion.

1.4. History in England

Annex 2 - Key documents in the history of electronic government in England offers a timeline of the sequence papers were published, demonstrating the way thinking, and thus emphasis, changed and so affecting delivery. The history, essentially up to the year 2003, has been well documented in differing approaches and styles by Margetts (2006, pp.250-258) and Organ (2003, pp.21-34); but the essential points are:

- In 1994 European Council adopts the resolution *Europe’s Way to the Information Society: an Action Plan*, European Commission (1994), following the report by Martin Bangemann, European Commissioner of DGXIII – the Telecommunication, Research and Development Directorate.

- In 1996 John Major's Conservative administration launched a Green Paper entitled Government Direct (CITU 1996), produced by the Central IT Unit established by the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine. This proposed efficiencies and cost savings through linking back office systems to government one-stop-shops. The work would be done by the private sector, which had some experience of this, in order to gain further know-how and ultimately being paid from the savings.
- A Labour Party adviser, formerly from Andersen Consulting, Liam Byrne wrote a report, Byrne (1997), which was published by the Fabian Society in November 1997, entitled Information Age Government, Delivering the Blair Revolution. Liam Byrne went on to work at a merchant bank and in consultancy before being elected to Parliament representing the Labour Party in 2004. He became Minister for the Cabinet Office in 2008.
- Despite the change of government, to Labour, after the 1 May 1997 election there was no change in direction with regards to electronic government and the Labour administration just wanted more of what the Conservative one had started. In fact, Brooks (2000, p.598), viewed this approach as being "More subtly and augmented from the practice of the previous administrations is implicit regulation", and thought the existing and newer quangos would "continue the trend, developed from the ethos of New Public Management".
- Tony Blair, the then British Prime Minister, initiated the e-government agenda at the Labour Party conference in October 1997, suggesting making 25% of government services available electronically by 2008.
- The 1999 paper "Modernising Government", Cabinet Office (1999, M6 para 16), proposed e-enabling 100% of services by 2008.

- Much of government ICT if not the whole world was concentrated at this point around the potential issue of the 'millennium bug', when time and resources were spent ensuring that computer software and hardware would cope with the change from 1999 to 2000, since storage savings had been incorporated in software in the earlier years of computing that were expected to present themselves in the form of errors when the year rolled over.
- In 2000 Prime Minister Blair brought the target date forward to 2005, in line with the European Commission's Lisbon agenda, but unlike other countries had committed to e-enabling every possible transaction.

The meaning of this target was further confused, for having apparently been met in 2005, in a Ministerial speech, Knight (2010), said "The Prime Minister recently asked me to be the Ministerial lead for Government on meeting the target to get virtually all public services online by March 2014", which appears practically incompatible with the 2005 target having been met.

In the year of the millennium, which had been something of a damp squib with little evidence of the "bug", possibly due to most public services going through a phase of updating hardware and software to prevent any failures in service delivery, a Public Service Agreement between the Treasury and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions was agreed expecting 100% delivery of services electronically and in the words of the agreement – HM Treasury (2000, chp 24 para 22):

"22. Ensure continuous improvement in the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local services through:

overall annual improvements in cost effectiveness of 2% or more; and ensuring that local government achieves 100% capability in electronic service delivery by 2005."

The associated spending review also allocated £350 million pounds to assist in ensuring this capability and over the five-year period amounted to just short of a million pounds being handed to every local authority in England that promised to make progress. This was an interesting approach, since rather than setting local government targets via legislation; the government was using the Audit Commission to examine their progress when auditing their accounts and also providing a carrot, in the form of a grant, to encourage progress. In fact, an earlier Performance and Innovation Unit report, Cabinet Office (2000, p.9) had advised that:

“Before investing in an electronic service, they need to be clear what level of take-up they are seeking to achieve, by when and how they are going to achieve it. If after the planned period of time, and the planned level of marketing expenditure, a service is not well used, the assumption should be that there is little case for further investment. Funding should be staged, so that there are clear break points at which to review the success of a service before making significant further investment.”

The total sum involved is much higher. According to Financial Times 21 February 2004: “Some Pounds 8bn has been invested centrally and locally, in e-government but with limited return so far”. Hallsworth et al (2009, p.11) also note that:

The UK accounts for 22% of the EU public sector IT market (with 12% of its population)...Overall, it is clear that the UK is one of the biggest spenders on government IT in relative terms. It should also be noted that the UK has a history of overspending on expensive IT-led business change projects.”

Whilst ‘business change’ is obviously a necessity when improving business processes in government or the private sector, it is doubtful whether it should be led by ICT and that instead the need for process change and possible resultant savings to be investigated prior to any large expenditure on ICT has been argued in Jenner (2009).

Throughout the period changes occurred amongst the various central government departments with responsibilities for electronic government either strategically and centrally, or for local government itself, with them being restructured, renamed and re-branded. All these changes can make tracking the most slightly historic documents and reports rather difficult. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 list the changes. Organ (2006, pp.104–105) also raises the frequent changes of government Ministers involved. This was also examined in detail and highlighted in Hallsworth et al (2009) who called for a proactive centre to coordinate both the spend and strategy on government ICT.

Table 1.1 – Government department changes

Year	Government department responsible
Prior to 1996	Department of the Environment (DoE)
1996	Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)
2001	Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)
2003	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
2006	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Table 1.2 – Cabinet Office Unit

Year	Cabinet Office unit responsible
Prior to 1998	Central IT Unit
1998 to 2004	Office of the e-Envoy
2004 on	e-Government Unit

The ODPM also initiated a fresh round of consultation around local government reorganization with the aim of regionalisation in 2003, the last restructure having taken place at the end of the Conservative administration in 1996. The 2003 effort failed but reorganization was tried again from 2006 onwards. This process created, on each occasion, a battleground between some of the local authorities involved, which was hardly conducive to establishing shared services.

To further confuse, targets were changeable, the consultative paper, DETR (2000a, p. 11) suggested that local authorities should set their own targets, since they might wish to focus on making particular services citizen-centric. The guidance issued following the consultation, DETR (2000b, p. 2), stated that “targets have been set for electronic service delivery in **central** Government; 25% of services capable of electronic delivery by 2002 and 100% by 2005”. Whilst it also accepted that local authorities were at differing development levels in terms of delivering electronic services, the report then suggested setting local targets reflecting the particular communities, although expecting them to fit in with government timescales.

The targets and timescales were shortly afterwards aligned. Unfortunately, as quoted in MyCustomer.com (2008, p.1) the Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire points out that “a target culture without a citizen’s perspective is intellectually and morally bankrupt. Excellence in public services cannot be achieved by centrally driven targets and national league tables alone.” This was also supported by Leenes (2005, p.20) who confirmed that targets were being set without accounting for the views of the citizens or public servants, or the organizational capacities to deliver them, and that assumptions have been made that online services are wanted by the public. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Mulgan & Lee (2001, p.12):

“So long as central government remains the primary source of funding for services, and so long as national politicians remain accountable for results, it is inevitable that the centre will retain overall responsibility for outcomes, and will legitimately want to set targets.”

This is confirmed by McSweeney (2006, p.27) who states that “increasingly in the UK Civil Service, the things that ‘count’ are the things that are counted – and this counting is now being defined and monitored centrally”.²

² To confirm this, McSweeney (2006, p.27) identified that the number of qualified accountants in the UK Civil Service increased from approximately 600 to over 2000 between 1982 and 2002, whilst the total number of civil servants had fallen.

At the time of writing the aforementioned report, Mulgan was head of the UK government's Performance and Innovation Unit and would be aware of the demands expected by politicians having been an advisor to Gordon Brown MP and also having founded the think-tank Demos. However, one wonders if there can be a better solution to improving the performance of local services than centrally mandated targets.

The lack of "usefulness" was summarised by Pickering (2008, p.13) stating that "in 2008, it is possible to say that government is falling behind even its own expectations and has failed to fully embrace the potential highlighted in its own rhetoric". Another difficulty with the target culture identified by Kuk & Gow (2002, p.5) was that comparing local with central government: "unitary authorities are currently delivering over 750 separate services to the public, which far exceeds the 520 services that are currently delivered by central government".

In addition, whilst Bloomfield & Hayes (2005, p.1) quote Cowell & Martin (2003) to list "initiative fatigue" as a further burden and then (Cowell & Martin, p.4) suggest that the initiatives weren't seen as particularly joined-up by local government, resulting in a range of problems. By the time of the report by EURIM (2008, p.7), we had Parliamentarians and industry strongly recommending scrutiny before and after legislation to ensure the join between policy and delivery, along with the effects of changes in staff and ministers

Thus, we had at this stage an England where 100% of services, capable of it, were due for electronic delivery in 2005 but the actual rationale behind had been prone to change along with change of source and as described in Work Research Centre (2005, p. 4) "the emphasis may have been on quantity and was top-down led, rather than rolling out services that fully incorporate users

needs". This is supported by Johnson & King (2005, p.3) who state that "the current "e-enabling" initiative for local authorities may only be skin deep – the genuine and radical transformation of public sector bureaucracy is still likely to prove elusive". Even the journal of the Institute for Public Policy Research, a think-tank with strong ties to the Labour Party had concerns (Tambini 2000, p.44) that government advisors compared it to banking and established targets reflecting the experiences of that sector. These assumptions were described as "naïve" and the targets expected to become possible millstones. This was also recognized by Senyucel & Stubbs (2005, p.40) who concluded that, without any rationale, central government had expected e-government to deliver massive changes in its approach to citizens.

The central supervision of financial controls through e-government is often employed to reduce opportunity for fraud or corruption, as is frequently identified in the third world (or even in the UK in terms of managing benefit fraud), which is highlighted by Ho (2002, p.435). However, this is not a direct cultural change, or at least won't be until a comprehension that frauds are frequently detected reaches public consciousness. Becoming "citizen-focused, responsive and flexible" would require social awareness on the part of politicians, government employees and citizens.

Teicher et al (2002, p.386) further commented on the comparisons between public and private sectors that "advocates of privatisation proceed from the basis of the superior efficiency of the private sector and its capacity to satisfy consumers' needs. Whether this is true cannot be established a priori, and the empirical evidence is mixed". A consideration by Bozeman & Bretschneider (1996, p.485) in their conclusion was that "the basic conclusion has been that the design, implementation and evaluation of management information systems differ between public and private sector organizations".

One of four key principles that were stated as “grounding the vision” for electronic government (Cabinet Office 2000, p. 20) was that “wherever possible ESD (*electronic service delivery*) should substitute rather than complement traditional delivery”. Something that might challenge its inclusiveness.

However, as noted by West (2004, p.24): “given the incremental nature of e-government change, it is little surprise that e-government has not increased trust or confidence in government”. This may be the reason why transformational change is now being proposed by governments. A possible answer to the limited take-up of electronic channels may be that of Ebbers et al (2008, p.182), who believe that the policymakers have failed to understand the way citizens deal with the range of service delivery channels.

Studying the needs of citizens and how they wish to interact with bureaucracy might help to fill this gap. However, a further dilemma was raised by Lindblad-Gidlund (2008, p.276) in that allowing the citizen to take part in improving service delivery might threaten the basis of representative democracy by citizens being directly involved rather than the traditional processes involving the informed assent, accountability and deliberation of those they have elected, which is why the transformation becomes complex. This was also raised by Potter (1995, p155) who had stated that “It takes only a small, logical step to progress from the principle of representation to that of participation, but it marks a giant leap in the way most public services are currently run”. This was also raised by Maxwell (2009, p.14) who stated that “government IT systems are flawed for another reason: they are designed to operate for the provider (the government), not to meet the needs of the users of public services. This again is out-moded and flies in the face of current best practice”.

The forgoing brief introduction indicates that whilst there had been effort and expense in providing for new mechanisms of delivering government services,

the response by the public appears to have been limited. It is with this in mind that the research was prepared.

Rather than attempt to lay blame at the door of any particular political party for failure to complete reforms, it might be accepted that, as is stated by Bloomfield & Hayes (2009, p.465), “prior to the New Labour Government’s call to modernization following its election in 1997, local government had a chequered history of reforms stretching back decades”.

Whilst much of the awareness of e-government failure is recent, this dilemma will be analysed in much greater detail in CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW and the empirical research following, described in CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH. This will be examined in conjunction with following the debate around whether citizens can or should be labelled customers of government agencies, which is undertaken in Section 2.4. The marketization of citizenship. The seeming failure of e-government has not been limited to the UK and the following section considers the international context.

1.5. International perspective

The UK has not been alone in its e-government experience for, as recognised by Almarabeh (2010, p.31), a large proportion of e-government initiatives worldwide had failed and there was international agreement that a far greater understanding of why the failures had occurred was needed.

From the days of the first computers there had been a slow awakening by those in power as to what became known as e-government actually meant in practice, including in the United States. McDaniel (2005, p.3) claims that “the roots of e-government can be found in former Vice President Al Gore’s efforts to reinvent

the federal government as smarter, faster and more effective” and whilst there are obviously differences between the USA and England, there are in both cases several layers involved in government and as McDaniel (2005, p.2) emphasises in her study of leadership, these layers and organizational boundaries require agencies, and their leaders, to cross them in order for e-government to succeed.

United States Vice President Al Gore had directed the National Performance Review (NPR) launched in March 1993, which published its report in September 1993 subtitled “Creating a government that works better and costs less” (Gore 1993). This was in alignment with New Public Management (NPM), which was happening internationally, and whilst looking at process redesign, also considered the potential of information technology to cut costs. The US Government Performance Results Act (OMB 1993), was made law in 1993 to encourage this by mandating agencies to develop measures of success and work towards them. Byrne (1997, p.3) accepts this as Labour’s inspiration for its “Better Government” White Paper, actually entitled “Modernising Government” (Cabinet Office 1999), on publication. Unfortunately, as Gullledge Jr & Sommer point out,

“One problem that has hindered the DoD implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and the Information of the Information Technology Management Reform Act (ITMRA) is that both call for process management concepts, without changing the fundamental organizational model.”

This was something that others would suffer from. In fact, Milakovich (2003, p.65), when describing the National Performance Review (NPR), points out that “Whether in the name of efficiency or political expediency, nearly every president in the past 120 years has attempted to reform the bureaucracy”. It may be unfortunate that (as recognized by Olsen 2005, p.25) administrative design has to compete with human capacities for comprehension, tending to result in reformers performing as “institutional gardeners” rather than engineers.

Something potential reformers may need to learn, before expecting massive spontaneous change.

Mintzberg (2007, p.12) described the American trend for performance management as “an obsession with measurement that inevitably puts quantity ahead of quality”. Ho and Coates (2002, p.8) stated that “performance measurement systems are usually designed and used by managers without regard for what citizens want to know about the operations of government”, perhaps a contradiction with the citizen-centricity claimed. In England, the new style of management was strongly criticized by Protherough & Pick (2002, p.viii) stating that:

“The public services were now given “targets” to achieve, like steelworks in the former Soviet Union. Everything, including so-called assessments of quality, was now commodified and judged quantitatively.”

This was also recognised by Hood (2007, p.96) who stated that “PSA [Public Service Agreement] targets across British government departments from 1998 arguably took the target approach at the top level of government to a point hardly seen since the demise of the USSR”. Hood (2007, p.102) also wondered whether “a sustained emphasis on public service targets with harsh sanctions for failure lead to the sort of system collapse some scholars associate with the cumulative effect of the USSR’s target system”. Ordonez et al (2009, p.19) in support, concluded that “experts need to conceptualize goal setting as a prescription-strength medication that requires careful dosing, consideration of harmful side effects, and close supervision”.

In December 1999, following on from Vice President Al Gore’s efforts, President Clinton issued a memorandum (Clinton,1999) ordering a host of government services to be online within three years and the top 500 forms to be available electronically within a year. In June 2000, whilst campaigning for the next election, Vice President Al Gore proposed, (CNN,2000), a series of solutions

that would give United States (US) citizens online access to federal services such as Social Security and Medicare within three years.

From the preceding outline of American progress, it can be observed that whilst the US had identified process redesign early on as being essential to change, it also recognised the layers of government as a potential barrier.

Another possible result of e-government was seen in the Peoples Republic of China where Zhang (2002, p.166) saw that some of the leadership believed “e-government can increase administrative efficiency by enhancing the control of central powers over the workings of the state bureaucracy”, something possibly believed but not admitted by politicians in the west.

A particular study of the costs and benefits of e-government was published in Australia in 2003 (NOIE, 2003). This admitted the difficulty in measuring improvements without baselines and largely relied on service deliverers percentage improvement claims along with a limited assessment of service quality by users.

In the Netherlands, where they have gone so far as to publish an e-Citizen Charter (e-Citizen Programme, 2006), the Director of the programme, Poelmans (2007, p.1) states that “progress in general is slow” and that “government becoming really citizen-centred obviously seems to be an even harder task”. In Van Deursen’s (2007, p.153) opinion, however, “the main conclusion is that there is no universal future vision on electronic service delivery in the Netherlands, both for policy advisors and scientists”. This is confirmed Europe-wide by Kunstelj & Vintar (2004, p. 133) who state that “E-government services are therefore still in their infancy and far from being services designed to meet customer needs”.

Bannister (2007, p. 182) described how:

“In December 2000, as part of the Lisbon agenda, the EU Council adopted an e-government benchmark initially made up of 23 components and indicators. Later this was reduced to 20. In essence these indicators were designed to measure:

- The percentage of public services on-line, and
- The extent of use of on-line public services for information access and completion of forms

The approach selected focused upon outputs.”

Schellong (2009, p.15) concluded a review of benchmarks by stating that “one of the weaknesses of many eGovernment benchmarks is their focus on national government”, along with the fact that they “also fail to capture the expected transformative effects of ICT on government”. The research described in this thesis has intended to pick up on both those key issues to fill the gap by looking at local government and to understand what has happened to the expected transformative effects.

1.6. Context of the research in the UK

As discussed in Section 1.5. International perspective, there had been an international tendency to follow the US model and attempt to bring a market economy to government. Thus, inherent difficulties in delivering e-government have been presented, including centralisation and a focus on targets, rather than outcomes.

In addition, in the UK, and in particular in England, as stated, there was from the outset little in the way of strategy or guidance. The work of delivering or monitoring change was largely done by trial and error over the following years, as local government was encouraged, by the financial carrots described in

Section 1.4. History in England, to report back to central government. These reports were entitled Implementing Electronic Government Statements (IEG's) and initially were required annually and numbered one through three. From these central government developed the model and standardised on the format of the Statements. A further four reports were called for in subsequent years, as listed in Annex 2 - Key documents in the history of electronic government in England.

The lessons learned from the early IEG's were further developed into a new set of targets described as Priority Service Outcomes, again sometimes found contradictory and inconsistent, but requiring a large investment in technology. These were produced without the establishment of baselines of existing efficiency to measure improvement against. In fact, at the time, as reported by Olphert & Damodaran (2005, p.34):

“Interviewees in the British Computer Society's Socio-Technical Group commented on the unsuitability of performance measures required in the IEG form, believing that the use of surveys and related qualitative data collection techniques to monitor satisfaction levels should be encouraged.”

Instead the country is presented with an array of technological solutions that promise little opportunity of being able to join up to deliver any fundamental efficiencies. Further, Irani et al (2005, p.77) conclude that their research indicated many decisions regarding e-government were political and evaluated on a subjective basis. However, as Sir Peter Gershon's review across central and local government (Gershon 2004) generated hopes of efficiency savings from the large capital investment made in establishing electronic government, the only deliverables to that point would appear to have been largely un-joined up attempts at innovation and where there were outcomes from national projects, piloted locally but funded centrally, many probably came too late to be of general use.

Whilst local government was directed one way in the implementation, central government departments operated separately and under direction of their Ministers, and senior managers appeared to follow their own preferred paths. This may have something to do with the history of the organizations, since the civil service has an almost ancient background, even from the time when it was reformed by Gladstone in 1871, whilst local government grew more organically as some power devolved to chosen groups of local people, increasingly as urbanisation occurred in the industrial revolution.³ Employing a rather different approach to this thesis, Organ (2006, p24), in an historical institutionalist study of ICT and e-government in England, describes the repeated attempts to join up government as far back as the 1830's along with other attempts to achieve effectiveness and efficiency by breaking it up, for example Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Next Steps programme in the 1980's, which then created difficulties for those attempting to join it up from 2000 onwards (Organ 2006, p.22 ff).

The area of health and social care is another one where some historical separation was found necessary; those original issues may be precedents for difficulties when attempting joining up through e-government. This was confirmed by a then Director at the Cabinet Office, Mulgan (2001, p.3) stating: "when the government faces a problem, or when its environment changes, the first instinct is to find new policies, not to reorganise itself to better process information or better respond". However, all these public bodies would appear to have a Weberian bureaucracy, as well described by Fountain (2001a, chp 4). In contrast, Dunleavy et al (2006 p.83 onwards), make a thorough exploration of the differences between civil services internationally and their roles in e-

³ Another target for e-government initiatives, the National Health Service, whilst having a modern formation, was built on the foundation of older Poor Law Unions. Organ (2006, pp.206–221) describes the political rationale behind the split occurring between health and social care as part of the establishment of the National Health Service in the 1940's. In fact, Marquand (2004, p.68) describes this outcome as the result of a difference in the political ideals of the two government ministers involved, in the 1940s, Bevan and Morrison.

government. They also identify (2006 p.33) key differences that establish them all as 'professional' bureaucracies, after Mintzberg, rather than Weberian which means they tend to treat information technology as a fringe rather than fundamental activity. This could have potentially important consequences in the delivery of electronic government. However, Petrakaki (2009, p.172), extracts from "the Weberian bureaucratic ideal" the public service ideals of "impartiality and impersonality, devotion and professionalism, ethos and accountability", which may be lacking in Mintzberg's 'professional' one. Further, Armbruster & Gebert (2002, p.179) identify bureaucracy as the foundation of open society, so not something to be automatically overcritical of.

The National Audit Office report (Bourne 2002, p.4) identified 'formality, uniformity, hierarchy and robustness' as values that maintained 'technology perverse' organizations within UK government. These attitudes were reinforced by a demand for robustness in the technology and solemnity in the service delivery, which added to the cost and lack of customer-friendliness of any e-government solutions.

The criticisms are repeated in an Economist special report on technology and government (Lucas 2008, p.13), which provides three main reasons for failure: "lack of competitive pressure, a tendency to reinvent the wheel and a focus on technology rather than organisation". This is developed by Bekkers & Homburg (2007, p.377) who criticise "a focus on service delivery structures instead of a focus on the processes of service delivery or the incompatibility of data systems and data definitions prevents the desired integration", making these commentators unique in isolating a lack of standardisation with data and systems.

Lyons (2007, p.80 on) emphasises what he describes as 'crowding out of local choice' by central control, which demonstrates the dichotomy involved in service delivery when prescription from government becomes involved. Lyons (2007,

p.202) is keen to see improved cross-boundary working and identifies the use of technology to do this, but at the same time highlights the tendency for re-inventing the wheel and again, that centrally-imposed restraints limit the ability to implement joined-up services (Lyons (2007) s.4.139). This conflict had been raised by Boyne (2003, p. 225) where he concluded that such improvements had the usual difficulty of balancing a wide range of local preferences within a national structure.

The centrally-driven and hierarchical model employed by government had also been identified by Brooks (2000, p.596), in her review of the modernisation agenda's approach to reforming service delivery and decision making in local councils. What may have also been ignored can be seen in an observation by Olphert & Damodaran (2005, p.34) that "it is estimated that around 80% of interaction between public service providers and the public is managed at the local or regional level, rather than at the national level".

Thus, in England there were apparent conflicts when modernising delivery, between the different layers of government, along with the missed opportunity to remodel services in a more efficient manner resulting from the haste to impose technology. There appears to have been some understanding of this by Thompson & Ingraham (2000, p.10) who, in a paper published in the British Cabinet Office's web archive⁴, have examined the issues behind the United States' National Performance Review and highlighted the need to understand and act on internal political dynamics of the organization in order to be able to make a success of any change programme. This is further confirmed by Daniel & Ward (2006, p.120), who quote an interviewee in local government: "we have very different cultures in differing services because of their different professional backgrounds. You're facing decades of inbuilt cultures that have arisen in

⁴ The paper was originally contained within the Service First and Modernising Government programmes but had been archived by the time the research commenced.

isolation". This fits with research by Polat (2005, p.96) who, when describing British local government, states that "there are institutional, organizational and societal barriers to the full exploitation of the Internet". This was agreed by Bolgherini (2007, p.212) who concluded that "the true obstacles to the expansion of the web and e-gov reside in the geographical borders, but also – and especially – in socio-cultural, temporal, as well as human and physical barriers". This was further confirmed by Organ (2003, p.33) when he states that:

"The problem is that the cultural, legal, procedural and structural separation of departments will not be conquered by a small, wide-focused central unit and its targets. Creating a joined-up mentality and common purpose in hearts and minds will take years, and will not be achieved through IT coordination alone."

Byrne (1997, p.3), accepted that "the Byzantine complexity of Britain's bureaucracy may confound new (sic) Labour's ambitions", and having recognised the issues with the layers of government he identifies (Byrne 1997, p.10) that "Departments do not treat the individual as a corporate being, but an unrelated collection of needs, each one of which is to be satisfied separately". Byrne himself became a Government Minister, although not one with direct responsibility for e-government or ICT (Hallsworth et al 2009, p.41). However, of Byrne's six bullet point proposals (1997, pp.3-4), only one made reality (the merger of Customs & Excise and Inland Revenue, which became HM Revenue and Customs) and there was a distinct failure to establish small-scale pilots to test changes. Much of his other content was lost by the time of the Modernising Government White Paper, less than two years later. The issue of government structures was raised by Dunleavy et al (2006, p.472) when they stated that "the fragmentation of quasi-government agencies in the United Kingdom has similarly raised issues of duplicating costly separate management hierarchies for very similar functions".

A former Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, Barber (2007, p.87), in his own autobiographical account of his time there, states of civil servants that "they often have no idea what impact the policies they are in charge of have on the

ground”. Even worse, he is highly critical of academic evaluations of policy implementations, in being late and turgid. The development of better systems and policies might occur by further involving the end users, which can be observed in the concept of “co-production”⁵ as outlined by Bovaird (2005a, p.222) where he describes the need for users and citizens to partake in the design and delivery of services and states that it is pointless for agencies to work closer without involving the “co-producers”. Damodaran et al (2005, p.9) also understood this and saw it as a necessity to increase the participation of citizens, along with improving the efficiency of services.

Chapman (2004, p.10) recognised that “One can ‘deliver’ a parcel or pizza, but not health or education. All public services require the ‘customer’ to be an active agent in the ‘production’ of the required outcomes”. Chapman (2004, p.88) quotes the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown in 2001 stating that “we know Whitehall does not know best, and we know that effective service delivery for families and communities cannot come from command and control, but requires local initiative and accountability”. Similarly, in elaborating a “general theory on public service delivery”, Hoogwout (2005, p.1), proposes that one cannot overemphasize customer orientation.

Evaluating the role of the public is supported by Selber & Streeter (2000, p.12) who stated that re-examining the role of the end-user as customer meant “seeing customers as active participants in the service design, delivery, and evaluation process”. This was echoed by Groth (2005, p.23), whose view was that the active pursuit of customer feedback might result in citizens changing their service expectations and providing feedback as part of those processes rather than the more voluntary behaviour of doing so only when very upset. This would develop a more efficient and effective service process design. For, as stated by Parker et al (2008, p.42):

⁵ Probably first employed by Parks et al, (1981). Co-production is discussed further in Section 2.6. Public value and social capital

“A council that is delivering good services and therefore hitting its performance indicators and scoring well on its inspections might simultaneously be delivering inconsistent customer service and failing to build trust in its decision-making functions.”

Perhaps the early warning⁶ from the conclusion to Bellamy & Taylor (1998, p.170), who anticipated the issues presented by the fragmentation of public services by history and more recently NPM, should have been heeded:

“The information polity is, in consequence, an arena which will display the same kinds of compromises and policy confusions that characterize other important areas of society. For all these reasons, the intoxicating visions of government in the information age should be allowed to dissipate in the thin air from whence they came.”

However, in their analysis of the use of performance indicators, Carter et al (1992, p. 178) identify a cyclical pattern in the reform of government management where disillusion, follows initial enthusiasm, after which it's forgotten before being discovered again. In which case those managing the change just need to know whereabouts in the cycle they are, along with the costs and benefits of benchmarking. From this initial contextualising of e-government nationally and internationally, it is clear that whilst political aspirations were high, there had been, and continued to be regular changes to the structure of governments. There had also been, in England, the adoption of a regime of centrally dictated targets but with little central control of the technology being implemented.

This indicates that the employment of measures indicating the success, or otherwise, of implementing modern mechanisms of service delivery would be worthwhile, along with ensuring that such measures can be employed at all levels of government, and within a changing environment. This also aligns with the aims of the research, outlined in Section 1.1. Introduction and following a

⁶ Publishing at the very start of the e-government era, Bellamy & Taylor (1998) appreciated, before the majority, that the complex structure of government was not an ideal platform from which to emulate the private sector.

more in-depth review of the literature in CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW will lead the way to establishing, via more comprehensive argument, the research questions in Section 2.8. Key research questions.

In summary terms for the UK, this brief history of the journey to the Blair e-government target date of 2005 points out a number of issues and contradictions:

- The initial lack of suitable metrics for comparison
- Summary targets being aimed at e.g. 100% services
- Limited view of process redesign or change
- Centrally dictated, politically-led and bureaucratic
- New Public Management has outsourced or restructured the necessary infrastructure
- Skin-deep without layer-crossing, when a fundamental reorganization is required

But, as more recent observers have noted, including Ebbers et al (2008), Maxwell (2009) and Parker (2008), there has been little improvement subsequent to 2005, an area to be covered in the full examination of the literature which follows in CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The aims of the research at this stage were to investigate the development of modern mechanisms of service delivery, such as those labelled electronic government, particularly in the context of English local government, and establish:

- whether successful or appropriate implementation has occurred or is taking place
- whether metrics have been used to guide the process and how
- what and how metrics can be established along the implementation route map and whether they are appropriate

The aim of the literature review is to establish what work has been done in the area of those research aims, to assist the development of the research questions, which are considered fully in Section 2.8. Key research questions. From Section 1.1. Introduction it can be seen that a great deal of money had been spent, targets had been established centrally and central government had commissioned a range of academic work, including ODPM (2003a) and ODPM (2003b), to look at aspects of electronic government, but that from the view of a professional in local government there appeared to be little outcome-supported theory to justify the English e-government vision to 2006.

A literature review was carried out in 1999 (Phythian 2000) for an MA dissertation. Relatively little additional work appeared in the period between 1999 and 2007 but since then things have changed considerably and, in particular, much more recently, see Section 2.7. Later developments. A chronological list of the specialised publications which have more recently appeared is shown in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1 – e-government Publications

Name	Start date
Electronic Journal of E-government (EJEG)	2003
Journal of E-government (published after 2007 as Journal of Information Technology & Politics)	2004
Electronic Government, an International Journal	2004
International Journal of Electronic Government Research	2005
Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy	2007
International Journal of Electronic Governance	2007

This is confirmed by Barca & Cordella (2004, s.2.1) who describe “the noticeable lack of research on local authorities as fundamental public sector organisations”, and also by Lofstedt (2005, p.48) who suggests that further empirical research is needed. Additional support for the absence of research is in the specific literature review by Titah & Barki (2005, p.5) in Canada, where they uncover only a few “thorough” studies.

They also highlight the diversity of the themes and perspectives along with the scepticism of some authors. Further evidence of the paucity of research comes from Kumar et al (2007, p.65) who state that “the literature in academic journals on the adoption of e-Government in academic journals (sic) is understandably almost non-existent since this is a very young field of research”. In addition, Castelnovo & Simonetta (2007, p.21) consider that “there still does not exist a consensus about how to evaluate the results of the investments in e-government projects”.

Further, Akesson, Skalen & Edvardsson (2008, p.89) consider that “many of the writings are of a normative and predictive nature”, that “the empirical literature reveals changes other than those proposed in the conceptual literature” and “empirical research into service orientation in the field of e-government is scarce”. This is confirmed by Esteves & Joseph (2008, p. 119) who state that

“studies beyond the citizens’ perspective are less common in the existing eGovernment literature“. Also, as Alshawi et al (2007, p. 28 -1) state that, “despite the importance of the evaluation of e-government services, literature shows that e-government evaluation is still an immature area in terms of development and management”. There is agreement to this by Salem (2007, p. 19), who concludes that “Consistent with previous research, the findings of this research confirm that there are no mainstream theories utilized in e-government benchmarking in particular”, along with Lee-Kelley & Kolsaker (2004, p.131) stating that “while research in e-government is growing, there is a surprising lack of coherent and robust measurement frameworks”. Bannister (2007, p.175) also reports discovering only a small amount of research on the issues around benchmarking e-government, after a wide and extensive search of the literature.

Much of the available material continues to be from political science, ethnographic or social science perspectives, with little from a systems or computing background, particularly from authors involved in the delivery of such systems. In fact, Dunleavy et al (2006, p.469) suggest that “insightful commentary on public administration issues from ICT professionals is relatively rare”, but perhaps they refer to the academic press. In a footnote to their analysis of e-government research Heeks & Bailur (2007, p.253) highlight the fact that “academic authors outnumbered practitioners by a ratio of roughly 8:1”. They further state (Heeks & Bailur 2007, p.258) that “in only one in seven papers was it clear that the researchers had left their own offices and ventured out to do their research”. The variety of disciplines is supported by Bloomfield & Hayes (2005, p.4) who state that:

“the emergence of New Labour and its modernising agenda present a complex array of issues that cut across a number of disciplines – attracting the attention of political theorists, sociologists, political geographers, researchers in public administration and in management, and others.”

This could be important, as Ho & Pardo (2004, p.2) state that “the practitioners aren’t reading research”. In addition, a Project Viego - “Towards a Virtual

Institute for Research into EGovernment”, has been established following an initial study, Irani & Elliman (2006, p.4), with a view to bringing together research, for as the report states, “an eGovernment research agenda involves a combination of social, technological and organisational issues at both governmental and individual citizen level”. They further acknowledge that although politicians identify technology as a solution, it’s more frequently recognised for bringing about problems, and that rather than developing the correct technology, the concern is to bring it in line with the processes.

This is confirmed by Rocheleau (2007, p.587) who concludes a review of five books on the topic by saying that “the basic point to be derived from all of these books is that there are few solid empirical studies to support many ICT prescriptions and that e-government research should focus on these gaps in research”. There is agreement on this from Monaghan (2008, p.3) who describes the e-government research field as “a confused state, attracting a broad range of researchers from several academic disciplines such as information systems, computer science, public administration and political science”. Whilst citizen behaviour is one area that is recognised as unclear, another is the internal process improvement that needs to occur before implementing online services.

Moon & Welch (2004, p.1) suggest that “e-government policy has been largely led by hype, rhetoric and normative argument” rather than seeking the views of citizens and public servants. This was also observed by Gronlund & Andersson (2007, p.267) who stated in their review of e-government research that the “field should focus on the *role* of ICT in contexts of society, government organization, method and individuals/citizens, and it should increasingly analyze rather than describe”.

In a review of the identity card project in England, another aspect of electronic government, Martin & Whitely (2007, p.75) considered that: “government has tended to select expert input in those circumstances in which the expertise fits their objectives, thus downplaying or dismissing the differing expert opinions”.

Hence ‘politics’ may also be at the root of some of the strategic choices made against the guidance of others, which may be correct, but that can only imply that the politicians are in the wrong. However, both analyses appear to concur that whilst the public may be generally happy with the delivery of e-government, interactivity and feedback must be ensured, which concurs with Cordella (2007, p. 272) who proposes a return to the egalitarian ideals of public administration. This was supported by Andersen (1999, p.325) who had stated that “If anyone is to benefit and therefore drive the process of public sector rebuilding, it has to be the consumer of public services, not the employees, the politicians or the institutions”. This is further reinforced by Yang & Rho (2007, p.1213) who, listing some of the proposed constraints to e-government, suggest that both politicians and managers have to rise above these in the ongoing process to integrate technology into political life. Bekkers & Homburg (2007, p.380) also conclude that there was a “mythical” component to many e-government policies indicating a belief that technology ‘per se’ assists or actually transforms bureaucracies to being customer-focused bodies.

Organ (2006) generally considered that the academic literature of the period had taken an uncritical approach to the policy reasons for e-government in the UK, whilst summarising the history of it in central government and the lack of coordination (pp.42–87) and duplication (p.58). He concludes (p.273) that “institutional factors tended to lead to ambiguous outcomes in the implementation of central IT policy across government”, since the organizations had developed ICT and e-government in a manner that suited them, despite

central policy⁷. This is further evidenced with examples of success when government had supported rather than directed change. This imbalance was confirmed in the fourth of twelve strong recommendations by the joint industry and Parliamentary body EURIM (2008, p.7):

“Service providers also collectively agree and publish clear professional guidance on best practice performance management and measurement of success to better align resources and close the ‘policy to execution’ divide, including the importance of appropriate base-lines and benchmarks for target setting and performance monitoring.”

So we can see that policy decisions at the outset of e-government had resulted in an absence of benchmarks or other metrics, but that ten years on there was some political and academic support for them. From an academic context, Jaeger (2005, p.703) proposes that “research about e-government must move away from focusing entirely on the present state of e-government and must examine what it is doing and what it should be intended to do within society”. This was echoed by Turner (2009, p.645) who argued for the need to stay in touch with practitioners, along with Bannister & Connolly (2009, p.109) who stated that e-government academic research was following the IS research tradition and instead needed to be more innovative.

Further, under the heading of “Economics of e-government”, Bannister & Connolly (2009, p.112) propose that “unsolved problems here include the problem of evaluation of the various manifestations of e-government and how this links into the broader question of public sector evaluation”. Which is intended to be one outcome (if only in one manifestation) of this research and is considered in the next section.

⁷ This may indicate that Organ might better have described the outcomes as ambivalent, since they might not be the ones centrally expected nor necessarily locally.

2.2. Reviewing and measuring e-government

From the previous section it is clear that little research of practical value to e-government practitioners had occurred, particularly on its evaluation. This section examines the range of government and academic literature to identify possible metrics, the reasons for needing them and what may be worth measuring.

2.2.1. *The absence of measures*

As Archer (2005, p.80) recognised when discussing measurement and evaluation in terms of e-government, “this is important in determining where the organisation stands, before making a decision on change strategy”. It was also concluded by Reddick (2005, p.54) that it was necessary to know what citizens wanted because otherwise, having supplied online services, they may not be used. Further, Ng-Kruelle et al (2006, p.4) observed that: “when adoption of an innovation is voluntary in nature, reactions (indeed, prospective user conceptualisations) can be non-uniform, making prediction and extrapolation of acceptance rates hard for those marketing the innovation”.

Early in the development of UK e-government, a government document was produced where the twenty second of forty four points in the Annex F: E-Business Planning and Prioritisation Framework of Cabinet Office (2000, p.117) included the statement: “Profile of customers, by type, to allow better estimates of take-up and need”. There is also the question: “How will you measure customer satisfaction?” So, someone had obviously considered some of the issues being reviewed and proposed in this research, but they weren’t promoted further until *after* the e-government target date of 2005, when HM Government (2007a) and HM Government (2007b) were published.

In 2002 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) commissioned a study by the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies at the University of Newcastle (ODPM, 2003b), along with carrying out a survey of local authorities (ODPM, 2003a). Researchers at Newcastle combined this with other work and outputs producing one of the better analyses of e-government in England, (McLoughlin & Cornford 2006). This research apparently arose due to the ODPM's concerns reported by McLoughlin & Cornford (2006,p.3) that "considerable variations were emerging in the progress of individual authorities".

The researchers at Newcastle take their approach to observing e-government from Fountain (2001a). Utilising the concept she describes as 'technology enactment' and considering the variations in outcomes as a result of differing decisions during the implementation, at the same time considering the change required by projects such as the implementation of e-government which require more 'processual models' of change than conventional linear ones as they describe in their paper (McLoughlin & Cornford 2006 pp.5–7). They hypothesise that, for e-government, the implementation of change relies not just on getting the appropriate technology but on

- configuration of the technology - or implementing technology appropriate for the situation it will be used in.
- configuration of the business processes – transforming service delivery
- changes in working practices – particularly being customer focused
- configuration of participation – gaining citizen awareness and usage

All of the above being reliant upon some kind of measurement to indicate them actually developing.

E-government is seen by Fountain (2001a, p.6) as major change ahead stating that "the reorganisation of government as a consequence of the Internet signals an institutional transformation of the American state". Presumably, the rest of the world would be affected in the same way. Fountain (2001a, p.13) herself

reports how recent forecasts of change as a result of technology have come to little; comparing it with the Industrial Revolution in Nineteenth Century Britain, which had required both economic necessity, and institutional arrangements to interact synergistically with technology for the change to occur. The 2009 recession, and subsequent effects, may yet have a part to play in generating economic necessity to drive a technological revolution.

However, the only guidance on metrics from the British Government during the period appears to have been a document entitled 'Measuring the Expected Benefits of e-Government' (H.M.Treasury, 2003) published as an extension to the standard Treasury financial guidance known as 'the Green Book'. The 47 pages are basically a guide to carrying out cost benefit analyses around the new forms of service delivery, without any overall view of either channel-migration or customer satisfaction. It does contain some references to transformation, in particular (U.K. Parliament, 2002, quoted in H.M.Treasury 2003, p.8): "the need to transform services is implied in a Public Accounts Committee (28 August 2002) report, which calls for services the public wants to use", and the "use of IT to enhance and improve services and not just to convert existing services".

The UK would not appear to be alone in lacking measures. In reviewing the United Nations "Global Readiness Index", Roy (2006, p.26), comments on the paucity of useful metrics as "the absence of measures of the quality of those products or services provided by government". This is supported by Yang & Rho (2007, p.1200) who state that:

"Evaluation of e-government should be based on the potential benefits it is supposed to bring such as economic competitiveness, citizen satisfaction, service quality, lower cost, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness. Although input and outcome measures are being developed for e-government, current academic studies focus primarily on the design and content of e-government websites rather than their substantive impact."

This was echoed by Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley (2007, p.71) who argued that “the UK government in its haste to transform itself, has unwillingly opted for quantitative (the number of online services) rather than qualitative (focusing on user experience) transformation”. This was taken further in Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley (2008, p.726) where it was stated that “although strategy documents are overtly citizen-centric, by and large e-government projects have been planned with minimal user consultation”. In 2008, an English government report (House of Commons, 2008, p.5) confirmed that progress was unmeasured: “the Government does not know how much it is saving through internet services, nor whether any savings are being redeployed to improve services for people who do or cannot use the internet”.

The comments above indicate that little account had been taken of what citizens were likely to want from e-government, how any benefits were to be assessed or even the establishment of some initial markers of where the services were before any changes. Another element, acknowledged by some to be required in such change, is how business processes can be improved with the assistance of technology.

2.2.2. Business process improvement

Following McLoughlin & Cornford (2008), having got the technology in, one has to get it working in a manner appropriate for the solution required, restructuring the business processes, developing and agreeing the culture of the work place and then finally encouraging the customers to use it. This is supported by Al-Mashari (2007, p.183), who, in a review of international work on e-government (EG) states that “EG is not achievable without improving the administration’s procedures and concepts of government employees”.

At a high level, Fountain (2006, p.22) describes the strong policies, practices and management needed for work to occur collaboratively across organizations and to ensure delivery, in the longer term. This requirement follows Fountain (2001a, p.24ff) describing the coming together of the range of agencies and partners, whether public, private or not-for-profit to create the 'virtual state' as part of the National Performance Review started in 1993. However, there was a lack of institutional change, along with a failure to review the implications of networked information and organizations. This had a resultant effect on "policymaking, the capacity of the state, and governance".

Foley (2008a, p.37) also considers that whilst ICT does not improve productivity on its own, it is a key part, when "reengineering, restructuring and redesign" are included. This is acknowledged by work in Flanders by Kampen et al (2005, p.137) who state that "citizens prefer improvements of the back office rather than improvements of the front office" and conclude with the bold statement (p.139) that:

"Visible political ownership of substantive government reforms, including business process reengineering may provide an incentive for politicians to redirect their efforts from superficial front-office initiatives towards the realization of efficacy and efficiency improving reconstructions of the back office."

EURIM (2008, p.2) supported this by stating that "Technology alone cannot deliver service improvements and efficiencies. Strong visionary leadership along with culture and attitude change is vital". Other evidence in this direction came from research in Ireland where Scott et al (2004, p.1730) state that "the logical starting point for e-government is an approach that prioritises organisational issues over technical ones". Further support for this comes from the complexity issue identified by Clarke & Newman (2006, p.9) who state "public services are often not 'individual' transactions, but involve relational processing (a programme of care or treatment) or a collective good (patterns of policing)". However, politicians and the public rarely see past the front office but to ensure improvements at the front end, much energy must be expended

behind it, which neither will see directly, but only as an outcome of that change, if and when successful.

Fountain (2001a, p.13) identifies a disincentive for bureaucrats to change since the types of gains made in the private sector would result in “budget cuts, staff reductions, loss of revenues, and consolidation of programs”. Informed by this, and importantly for this research Fountain (2001a, p.14) also states that:

“without a conceptual framework to guide analysis and practice, researchers might simply document internecine bureaucratic struggles alternately with cases of dramatic innovation rather than helping decision makers to structure decisions and their consequences.”

Margetts (2006, p.262) also identifies a similar set of issues when she lists the remaining barriers to e-government as being lack of ICT expertise and reluctance to change, but flags up the major change as having been “large scale outsourcing”.

The apparently exhaustive literature review by Titah & Barki (2005, p.6) developed and summarised a list of five foci from the material examined:

1. The influence of managerial practices on e-government adoption
2. The influence of organizational and individual characteristics on e-government adoption
3. The influence of governmental subcultures on e-government adoption and use
4. The influence of ICT characteristics on e-government use and acceptance
5. The measurement of e-government impacts

Chircu & Hae-Dong Lee (2005, p.20), also in the USA, have proposed six key success factors for e-government, which are:

1. Conduct business process reengineering (BPR) in preparation for e-government
2. Offer one-stop e-government solution
3. Appoint visionary change agent
4. Divide and conquer (modularise)
5. Build a prototype
6. Mandate change

Whilst the first emphasises the need for BPR as a preparatory phase, the second covers the co-ordinated and networked solution that is the ideal and the final one means that change needs to be driven from the highest level and not made optional, which contrasts with the approach seen in England. This was also the view of Yang (2005, p.20) who stated that:

“The policy implication is that e-government is not only a technical or organizational matter of applying web-based technologies; rather it is an institutional change process. Elected officials and public managers should deliberately remove outdated institutions and design new ones to support the e-transformation. This job cannot be left to information technology managers or programmers.”

This was further supported in the conclusion of Weerakkody & Dhillon (2008, p.12) who reported the need for cultural change in local government to remove departmental silos and accept business process reengineering.

Titah & Barki (2005, p.6) in support of their five foci state that: “several authors have empirically shown through case studies that the absence of a clear and well executed process reengineering strategy significantly hinders e-government adoption and success”. They also extract the need for management support and formal governance structure from their research. Along with “suboptimal processes”, Wauters & Lorincz (2008, p.6) consider that “burdensome legal frameworks” need to be eliminated to improve services, over

and above ICT improvements, whilst there is agreement on this from Asgarkhani (2005, p.158), who when investigating e-government in New Zealand, suggests that such benefits will only be delivered when the whole delivery is thoroughly planned and supported, along with employing suitable metrics to check progress. There was further confirmation of this from Gil-Garcia (2005, p.33) in his conclusion, stating that “The determinants of e-government are more related to organizational, behavioural, institutional, political, socio-structural, and cultural aspects.”

Although there is no evidence presented by Al Kibsi et al (2001, p.66), they state that their “experience suggests that just 15 percent of e-government’s benefits stem from technology solutions; the rest come from streamlining the delivery of services.” Al Kibsi et al (2001, p.72) also state three critical lessons, which are: “don’t underestimate the resistance of government employees”, “e-government services don’t justify the investment if citizens and businesses don’t use them” and thirdly “e-government can be either a profit engine or a financial black hole, depending upon the strategy and mind-set chosen”

However a Research Note from Gartner Research by Di Maio & Kost (2004, p.2) contained the forecast that “Through 2004, only governments that focus on enterprise architecture and back-office re-engineering will achieve their original e-government objectives earlier than 2010”, part of which is confirmed for Canada by Roy (2006, p.144) corroborating the rising pressures of e-government for a more centralised management architecture to foster an ‘enterprise-wide’ architecture for more integrated service outcomes.

Beynon-Davies & Williams (2003, p.146) having examined the state of e-government in Wales (which, with the Welsh Assembly and only unitary councils, has a slightly different structure to England), highlight the following as areas of concern:

- The business case
- Direction from the Assembly
- Resourcing and sustainability
- Partnerships with other authorities
- Partnerships with other agencies
- Skills
- Data sharing
- Benchmarking

The relevant ones to this discourse being: the lack of direction from above, the political obstacles to partnerships, difficulties managing partnerships and lack of proper benchmarking.

Becker et al (2004, p.506), from their research in northern Germany, provide the advice that “before classic public services can be offered as eservices it is advisable to reorganise the underlying processes and organisational structure in the back office”.

Amongst the other findings by McLoughlin & Cornford (2006, p.23) were that:

- authorities pointed to a paucity of revenue funding to assist the bedding in of new services
- limited skills available for change management and business process re-engineering
- little active corporate management
- little effective partnership working

Having investigated both lack of measures and the desirability for process change to deliver modern government services, there is a need to consider how changes can be measured, which is examined next.

2.2.3. *Measuring changes*

(McLoughlin & Cornford 2006, p.19) also identified a lack of evaluation mechanisms being established.

“Attempts at evaluation were partial and narrowly focused, and although partly explained by the stage of implementation in many cases, it was clear that evaluation was not something that had been embedded in e-government plans from the start.”

This is further emphasised by Henriksen (2006, p.25) where the study states that “the demand for e-services has revealed serious challenges concerning methods on how to study and analyze this area” and also Foley (2005, p.4) who comments that “monitoring and evaluation needs to be better incorporated in e-government planning”. This is repeated in a technical paper by Cai & Wang (2006, p.2) where they state that:

“In order to make e-government development a continuous improvement process, there should be metrics for measuring performance. Besides the strategy, there should be a way to control the development process to collect feedbacks during development in order to improve the overall system. This is a philosophy well developed in cybernetics and system engineering. We all know that a good control system requires input, output, the system model and feedback.”

In contrast to feedback loops as proposed above, models are also proposed for technical quality of service by Corradini et al (2007, p.747) who take no account of the end-user opinion, which the researcher considers a mistake given the support for it indicated in Section 2.2.1. The absence of measures.

The European Commission is one body to recognise that measurements are required, but their Measurement Framework (European Commission, eGovernment Unit 2006, p.54) offers a list of 92 indicators spread over efficiency, democracy and effectiveness and still wants to establish standards, along with priority services to be measured. A similar analysis by the OECD is

presented as a five-page annex of costs and benefits in Lau (2006, p.5). Whilst Foley (2005, p.45), who has worked with Lau, reproduces the list and states but extends the requirement to include net benefits by reducing the benefit costs by the delivery ones.

Similarly Bovaird (2005b, p.33) established as one of the conclusions in his analysis of performance measurement and evaluation for the OECD that:

“eOrganisations do not have objectives – it is stakeholders who have objectives. It is important that the differences between stakeholder perspectives and priorities are understood when setting direction and monitoring performance of e-government and e-governance programmes.”

This indicates the need to establish metrics from the citizens’ perspectives and in his review of government performance, citizen satisfaction and trust, Van Ryzin (2006, p.9) concludes that more effort is needed to develop such metrics, in order to help both citizens and managers.

A general model reported by Gouscos et al (2007, p.881) was described as being “intended as a low-cost general purpose framework for first-level assessments of e-government service quality and performance”. This model includes a mix of 20 quantitative and qualitative metrics that require further private discussion sessions on the satisfaction data for it to be evaluated, is a further example of a complex tool. In contrast, another model is produced by Mitra & Gupta (2008, p. 292) who after reviewing the organizational history, development and structures, level this out with key metrics of internal and external satisfaction, and efficiency.

Even in March 2007, a report by the esd-toolkit, (Oddy 2007, p.11), a body funded by councils and government, stated that “it is a firm conclusion of this study that the lack of any incentive to local government to actually undertake

measurement of take-up predicates against the drive to increase take-up of e-services". Whilst Min et al (2007, p.260) continue the argument that "to measure their success and identify potential improvements, it is highly desirable to judiciously study the performance of e-government services from the citizen perspective". This is confirmed by the conclusions of Steyaert (2004, p.374), who proposes a checklist being employed when government services are being designed to ensure they reflect the citizen's view.

Thus we have the literature defining a need for process change and measurement. Straub et al (2002, p.228) consider how we choose metrics:

"Thus, operationalizations, or measures, are the means by which we attempt to capture a moonbeam and hold it in our hands. There must be data that represents our abstractions well enough that we can conclude something about the intellectual phenomenon that we are actually interested in."

The above would indicate the viability of a proxy measure rather than a traditional quantitative approach. Having considered the absence of measures, process improvement and some existing measures, the research needs to determine what metrics might best improve modern mechanisms of service delivery from the citizen's perspective, which is the focus of the following section.

2.3. Metrics and user satisfaction

Having considered the absence of existing metrics relating to modern methods of service delivery, apart from some complex ones, designed as benchmarks for national government, the research is now to focus on examining measures that may support smaller governmental bodies, assist with modern service delivery and reflect the relationship between citizen and government. Describing the

relationship between evaluation and metrics as an “unholy alliance”, Geisler (1999, p.6) then goes on to develop a definition:

“A metric is a system of measurement that includes the *item* being measured, the *unit* of measurement, and the *value* of the unit. If we combine this definition with Werner and Souder’s classification scheme, metrics can be in the form of a single measure, a ratio, an index, or an integrated measure that combines several metrics, even with different attributes, such as objective and subjective.

This might indicate the preferred expression as being ‘system of measurement’.

Marquand (2004, p.29) forthrightly directs that “the measuring rods that assess efficiency in the market domain – ‘throughput’, productivity, added value, the monetary return on capital – have no place in the public domain”. This is surprisingly echoed for the whole service sector by Spohrer et al (2007, p.71) who state that:

“Over the past three decades, services have become the largest part of most industrialised nations’ economies. Yet there’s still no widely accepted definition of service, and service productivity, quality, compliance, and innovation all remain hard to measure.”

This should be considered surprising given the large scale of the industries involved and the time period during which these matters have had to be considered over. It is therefore, unsurprising that the public sector is equally short of related measures.

In his introduction to Shewhart (1986, p.i), W. Edwards Deming states that:

“There is no true value of anything. There is, instead, a figure that is produced by application of a master ideal method of counting or of measurement. This figure may be accepted as a standard until the method of measurement is supplanted by experts in the subject matter with some other method and some other figure.”

Which may be accepted as a proposal for the employment of volatile proxy measures. Somewhat differently, in their seminal work on reinventing

government, Osborne & Gaebler (1992, p.351) observe that “The problem comes when organizations measure *only* process”, along with an instruction (p. 355) to “do both quantitative and qualitative analysis”. Indicating a possible need for the thesis to consider the place of both these classes of measure.

The need for appropriate metrics is picked up by Griffin & Halpin (2005, p.19) who quote an E-Government Manager at an English council which had already achieved the 100% electronic service delivery target, who stated that: “We like to think that we are reasonably well advanced. Exactly how far is hard to say, really”. This is more recently reinforced by Margetts (2006, p.258) who states that “A key performance indicator of e-government is the extent to which it is used, and ... there is a shortage of user data” and also by Gil-Garcia et al (2005, p.20) who state that “part of what is needed to create a useful shared vision is the development of clear dynamic indicators for the evaluation of e-government initiatives”.

Contained in a practical guide (that was also published by his employers Fujitsu Services) for practitioners (Pumphrey 2006b), Pumphrey (2006a, p.64) states that:

“the ultimate rule emerging is that we need to ensure that measurement systems are in place to monitor and refine the progress of the strategy. This means that we need to track the volume and resource absorbed for all contact drivers across the channels.”

Historically, Galton (1907, p.450), had acknowledged the trustworthiness of democratic judgement in his paper on *vox populi* and, more recently in the USA, Rosenhoover & Anderson (2005) describe a process of Citizen Driven Government Performance (CDGP) to develop a range of citizen-derived performance measures for certain cities there. They claim that one size does not fit all and local approaches are required. In terms of information systems, DeLone & McLean (1992, p.88) had identified six major categories for identifying success, these were system quality, information quality, use, user

satisfaction, individual impact and organizational impact. This was supported by Seddon & Klew (1996, p.100) who concluded that user satisfaction was a “response to three types of user aspirations for an information system: Information Quality (H1), System Quality (H2), and Usefulness (H5)”. Scott et al (2009) propose a development of the DeLone & McLean model discussed above, and considered overly complex, but like a number of others focuses on web sites alone.

Importantly, Behn (2003, p.586) states that “neither the act of measuring performance nor the resulting data accomplishes anything itself; only when someone uses these measures in some way do they accomplish something”. In terms of electronic government Kunstelj & Vintar (2004, p.145) conclude that the current metrics reflect the “too narrow focus on e-government development”. They then request metrics to measure the progress towards transformation of services. This is also raised as a concern from the outputs of the Viego project, (Irani, et al 2008, p.161) which lists “performance assessment” amongst its four concerns, and within that a “Need to adopt metrics, in an attempt to benchmark and better quantify eGovernment value and benefits” along with “Disagreement surrounding which metrics to use”. However Holman (1999, p.69) had proposed a performance framework for joined-up access that included the number of transactions, the user satisfaction with service and the user satisfaction with outcome. This requirement for such measures was echoed later by Kunstelj & Vintar (2004, p.146) who proposed that a comprehensive indication of how service integration and back office changes affect customers was needed.

Flak et al (2009, p.222) further developed this with an outline proposal for employing benefits management, along with the determining the public sector value changes to determine benefits realization in electronic government projects. This was also raised by Grimsley & Meehan (2007, p.135) who highlight the fact that private sector measures “do not naturally support the

attainment of the broader socio-economic and socio-political goals that characterise so many e-government projects”.

As inferred already,

“The design, implementation and use of measurements should be a simultaneous and continuously evolving process in which changes in the strategic direction and learning requirements of an organization are constantly accounted for, a speedy and effective implementation of the formulated strategy is to be achieved.” (Anderson & McAdam 2004, p.476)

Chapman (2004, p.59) supports this when describing the Toyota Production System as holding:

“attention to details and an attitude that sustainable improvement can be achieved only over a long period by incremental progress. This approach conflicts directly with the requirements of politicians who make promises to ‘cut crime by x per cent in the next three years’ or to ‘reduce waiting lists by next year’.”

Seddon (1992, p.71) stated a fundamental principle that “to be in a position to improve things it is necessary to know the extent to which customer requirements are being met”, and later on, in Seddon (2008, p.14) that “instead of targets the public sector needs measures that aid understanding and improvement”. Such a measure or constituent target, as described by Holman (1999) and Millard (2008) for finding out the extent to which customer requirements are being met, is to inquire of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which is dealt with in the following section.

2.3.1. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Confirming the opinion in a British Cabinet Office discussion document, Donovan, Brown & Bellulo (2001, p.5) state that “many private sector organisations use customer satisfaction measurement to improve their

services". The document then describes the major models available but also concludes by offering "user experience" as another approach. Abhichandani and Horan (2006, p.7), in a study focused on the use of satisfaction as an e-government metric, conclude that "citizen-based evaluation of government systems has been the focus of a number of studies. However, there have not been many studies that focus on satisfaction as a major construct". In support, Grimsley & Meehan (2007, p.139) stated that "the most common and natural subjective measure of service experience and service outcome is *satisfaction*". Although describing the private sector, Taylor (2002, p.24) stated that "how did we improve the consistency of our service? We started by developing a solid method for measuring customer satisfaction". He also provided the observation, (2002, p.25), that:

"We found that 'complete satisfaction' doesn't mean perfection. Our customers, we learned, care most about friendly service. Some of our 'completely satisfied' customers had experienced glaring problems with their rentals, but what they remembered most was how quickly and courteously our people resolved their problem."

In the context being examined in this research, satisfaction is subjective to the citizen, being dependent upon a number of areas including expectations and understanding. However, although gaps (between expectations and standards of service delivery) can be managed (as is outlined in Section 2.3.6. Gap analysis), satisfaction remains largely non-quantifiable and inexact, so in most instances should be dealt with by employing samples and statistical analysis as described by Cassel (2001, p.1) who states that "measuring customer satisfaction here means evaluating the users perception of the quality of the services offered". Unfortunately, employing sampling and statistical techniques requires a great deal of resource, not something that is readily available in the smaller local government service, and skills of a sort not present. Peterson & Wilson (1992, p.68), somewhat to the contrary, argue that surveys skew results towards the positive end of the scale, i.e. respondents are more favourable, along with presenting various issues around their timing and the context within which they occur, also suggesting that

“The measurement of customer satisfaction is less than precise, possibly confounded with other variables, subject to considerable methodological contamination, and likely reflective of the influence of numerous factors other than those explicitly incorporated into measuring devices.”

And also that “customer satisfaction ratings may well reflect the Hawthorne effect: Attempts to measure customer satisfaction will, in and of themselves, serendipitously increase satisfaction, regardless of the product or service being investigated”. The Hawthorne effect, Draper (2010), being noticed skewing that can occur when participants in a study are aware of being observed. In terms of “satisfaction” itself, Babin & Griffin (1998, p.133) propose that a two-factor model (i.e. satisfaction and dissatisfaction) provides a better fit and is suitably parsimonious for practical measurement of customers. This is supported by Van Ryzin (2006, p.9), who notes that “there is some evidence that citizens’ overall satisfaction with government predicts important behavioural responses, such as trusting government”; and also by Cai & Wang (2006, p.3) who propose as the fourth step in their design method that “instead of return of money, the return in public sector should be systematic measurement of satisfaction from users of those public services”. Transposing the Six Sigma principles from manufacturing to service industry, Fleming et al (2005, p.4), note that “the only way to improve local performance is to provide feedback at the level where the variability originates. An alternative approach to the other half of Babin & Griffin’s (1998, p.133) two-factor model, dissatisfaction, was proposed by Stradling et al (2006, p.105), which was a dissatisfaction measure labelled as ‘disgruntlement’, which included importance combined with the performance measurement. This may be of assistance when evaluating the use of gap analysis, an investigation of which follows at Section 2.3.6. Gap analysis.

Frei et al (1999, p.1212) consider, from a review of banking, that customer dissatisfaction is an important consequence of process variation, which is confirmed by Tsikriktsis (2004, p.5) in his examination of the U.S domestic airlines. Identifying the causes of variations can assist in improving the process.

From a different angle we have the proposition by Kampen et al (2004, p.6) who conclude that “decreasing the number of disappointed clients will therefore have a much stronger effect on increasing trust in the public institution than increasing the number of well-pleased clients”. Which aligns with Kano’s methods (Berger et al 1993), which are used in Total Quality Management, where it is important to deliver the ‘Must be’ customer requirements. This may be a crucial factor in people using or moving to the newer services or channels. The role of customer satisfaction is echoed in a study of the range of delivery channels within the Portuguese banking system by Patricio, Fisk & e Cunha (2003, pp 480–481) where they summarise their research by stating that:

“Rather than concentrating efforts on improvements to each SDS (service delivery system) in isolation, it seems important to understand and improve the contribution of each channel to customer satisfaction within the overall service offering.”

Adcroft & Willis (2006, p.394–395) argue that “much of public sector provision should be treated in a gestalt manner where the overall quality of the provision is determined by how the individual elements fit together”. This would appear to be supported by Johnston (1995, p.99) who states:

“Attempts to increase satisfaction rather than the removal of dissatisfaction maybe has been the down fall of many quality improvement or so-called TQM programmes.[...] Maybe without a strategy that includes both dissatisfaction removal and satisfaction increase, or at least dissatisfaction removal first, staff and, indeed, customers could become justly cynical of the organization’s attempt to improve service quality.”

Johnston (2001, p.67) has further argued that:

“Financial benefits accrue from satisfying and retaining dissatisfied customers through service recovery, by using information from complaints to improve both operational and organisational-wide processes and by satisfying and retaining employees.”

In Johnston 2004 (p.131), the same author concludes that customers will accept problems with delivery as long as promises are kept and the issues dealt with. However, as Potter (1988, p.153) remarked “few authorities used complaints as a form of quality control”. Dissatisfaction, whilst it might have negative connotations, as with the government minister who prevented the branding of a performance indicator as “demand failure” (Section 2.3.4. NI14), can provide direction to the correction of issues and as argued by Babin & Griffin (1998, p.133) focusing on dissatisfaction can avoid the contamination of the construct, which is likely to result in the distortions already discussed.

Banking is an important parallel in this area since it has the ability to offer services over the same range of channels that government is attempting to use but has started its use of alternate channels earlier, so any findings may be relevant⁸, although should not be transferred across unthinkingly as discussed in Section 1.4. History in England. In fact, other banking researchers such as Joseph, McClure & Joseph (1999, p.190) have recommended that “the performance of banking institutions be monitored on a regular basis. This is important as isolated monitoring could give ‘snapshots’ only and not accurately depict trends”.

Unfortunately, relatively early researchers, Szymanski & Hise (2000, p.4) state that there had been no research to examine the “determinants of e-satisfaction”, one of the channels under their investigation. Chong, Pervan & Bauer (2001, p.249), however, chose ‘satisfaction’ for their study of the success of electronic commerce implementation as one of the most often used variables in the IS literature and a lack of which was thought by scholars to be a cause of the public stopping their use of ICT. Ancarani (2005, p.8), in examining e-service in Italian public services, considers that “in undertaking such changes, it is

⁸ Whilst supermarkets, electrical retailers and book/record stores are frequently employed as analogous with e-government for the purpose of e-commerce, they operate in a competitive market and are more volatile to customer choice than banks.

imperative that organisations develop effective means of assessing organisational performance from the customer's perspective".

Focusing on e-government in Canada, Kumar et al (2007, p.69–70) supply two propositions, the first that "a higher level of customer satisfaction will increase the rate of e-Government adoption" and the second that "higher quality of services will lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction". They conclude that "the literature on consumer adoption of e-Government appears fragmented and is devoid of an integrative framework that identifies the appropriate nature of relationships among the key drivers of adoption". In response the Canadian government developed a Service Improvement Initiative and published a set of guidelines for key performance indicators that cover all the current channels, including definitions and examples (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2004).

Also in Canada, Kernaghan (2007, p.129) notes from surveys that "citizens' satisfaction with a service is higher if they obtained the service through their preferred channel". In the same volume Bontis (2007, p.152) states that "government-wide transformations of most business processes are required, with a focus on the quality of service, citizen satisfaction, and transparency". Whilst in Switzerland Schedler & Summermatter (2007, p.310) concluded their analysis of local government there by stating that "using measures of customer orientation is both well motivated and fruitful to a municipality". By "orientation" they mean they mean that the municipality has knowledge of the customer needs.

As Sen (1982, p.66) has described: "choices that reveal individual preferences may be quite inefficient for achieving welfare of the group". Which suggests that while individual feedback may have some relevance, it is important to look at that across the whole community. A further finding from Canada, (Kernaghan, 2007, p.108) was that the determinants of customer satisfaction vary by

channel, hence the need to establish it as a metric rather than those things that combine towards it, such as ease-of-use in self-service, as identified by Xue & Harker (2002, p.254). This is potentially confirmed by Borna & Stearns (1998, p.43) that “the customer is [right], at least when it comes to efficient and socially beneficial marketing and economics”.

Investigating the retail market, van Bigelen et al (2006, p.376), believe that their findings indicate that multi-channel operations need to be managed and monitored for customer evaluation and behaviour, which is confirmed by the Ramsay & Smith (1999, p.4) study of the Australian banks and also by Khalifa (2004, p.4) who states that “With the proliferation of electronic commerce, the distinction between end-users and online customers is becoming difficult if not impossible, stressing the need to integrate the IS and marketing satisfaction theories”. This may equally apply to the public sector. Another study of multiple channel performance, Kabadayi, Eyuboglu & Thomas (2007) indicated success when alignment with the business strategy was in place. Moore & Flynn (2004, p.70) consider that:

“multi-channel delivery is a discipline – or functional area – in its own right. It is less about managing channels than it is about:

- understanding customers and their behaviour
- working out how to move people from one channel to another
- understanding the possibility of increased flexibility in the use of organisational resources in delivering services
- clarifying how customers move themselves through those channels and what support they might need to complete their business

This means putting yourself in your customer’s shoes as part of the decision-making process around service delivery options.”

A group of researchers who do focus on customer satisfaction, Kim, Im & Park (2005, p.41), propose a model based on the Korean National Customer Satisfaction Index (NCSI), which they call the Customer Satisfaction Model for e-Government (g-CSI), which involves quite a number of factors and probably

requires a complex computer system to calculate it. Similarly Papadomichelaki et al (2006) review quality of service as a measure but construct a model with a large number of variables.

In a general study of the provision of “quality” across the public sector, Gaster & Squires (2003, p. 62) evaluate satisfaction across a number of models whilst attempting to define “quality” and conclude that the notion of satisfaction must be “approached cautiously”, due to what they envisage as a possible gap in expectations, when attempting to measure it. The subject of gaps, including those in expectations, is considered in Section 2.3.6. Gap analysis. A further approach, when dealing with a range of factors, is to correlate them onto a scorecard.

2.3.2. Balanced Scorecard

Another possible tool to assist in measuring service delivery is the Balanced Scorecard, which while not a metric in itself, is a collection of metrics used to measure an organization’s progress towards its strategic objectives. In a demand for performance measures, Hakes (2001, p.327), identifies customer satisfaction as a “lagging” measure since it occurs after an event and states that: government reform is unlikely to succeed if the organizations involved cannot effectively measure whether anything is resulting from new strategies.

Moore (2003, p.9) proposes a “Public Value Scorecard” and suggests that “Nonprofit managers are probably going to need a mix of outcome, output, process and input measures to allow them to recognize value in what they are doing, and find ways to improve their performance”, but does note that the non-profit goals are client satisfaction or social outcomes. Kelly (2002, p.11) proposes that “the balanced scorecard was created from an acknowledgement that performance measures had outlived their usefulness in business

organizations” and in Kelly 2005 (p.82) identifies that “a systematic approach to customer satisfaction surveying is required” and that “adopting a balanced scorecard in the public sector requires sharing service decisions with citizens”. This is supported by Lawson-Body et al (2008, p.12) stating that:

“the Balanced Scorecard serves as a management tool for the following purposes: 1) identifying the performance drivers that affect electronic service delivery and 2) establishing a set of cause-and-effect relationships among business performance factors.”

Macur and Daszko (2006, p.4) state that “the Balanced Scorecard approach connects well with systems thinking, with some warnings”. Overall these would be that “optimization of the system does not result from optimization of the individual pieces”. Another systems thinker, Wolstenhome (1998, p.5) proposes that “the purpose of balanced measurement across all operations is seen to provides (*sic*) the knowledge on which to create future strategic vision”. In an investigation of the rationale behind the implementation of the Balanced Scorecard by a New Zealand district council, Todd & Palmer (2001, p.5) came to the opinion that that:

“Rather than taking the view of a council with one vision, some people see the council as being divided geographically and politically into separate areas. This viewpoint leads to different area departments delivering different services with only their own communities in mind, rather than the whole district. This in turn leads to fighting over a limited pile of resources and hence the sub-optimal delivery of these services for the whole district.”

In fact, Moullin (2007) has developed a Public Sector Scorecard which has emphasis on service users, risk and observing across organizational boundaries, although it has primarily been employed in a healthcare context.

In considering the range of performance management frameworks, Walker (2008, p.340) considers that “during discussions, the appropriateness of the performance prism was recognised as having potential as a simple framework which was easily understood and applied”. Neely et al (2001, p.1) describe the

performance prism as “a second generation measurement framework designed to assist performance measurement selection – the vital process of picking the right measures”. It adds on a facet entitled “Stakeholder Satisfaction”, which may include suppliers, employees and community groups. The second facet is “Strategies”, the third facet is “Processes”, the fourth “Capabilities” and the fifth one is “Stakeholder Contribution”, which permits input by the stakeholders as well as their needs being considered. Hence this model is even closer to systems thinking with its emphasis on process and stakeholders.

Stowers (2004, pp.36-38) reports from studies across the United States her analysis of potential measures from those used as exemplars, presenting a table of input, output and outcome measures, along with eleven recommendations on what jurisdictions need to do whilst developing them. She also states that “unfortunately, few jurisdictions today are actively using performance measures to assess the impact of their e-government efforts”. Importantly, in a review of the Balanced Scorecard, Maltz et al (2003, p.199) conclude that “the authors believe it is also critical that any prescriptions for performance measurements should be simple, dynamic and flexible over time, foster improvement, and be linked to the organization’s strategy, goals and objectives”. Which might also fulfil the aim of a public sector performance prism. Whilst neither promoting nor decrying the scorecard or prism principles, the research indicates benefits from observing measures and indicators in their widest context, which both have the potential for. Measures may also be used to compare an organization with its peers, as in benchmarking.

2.3.3. Benchmarking

Bannister (2004, p.1) admits that:

“Truly meaningful benchmarking was not going to be easy. It would require not only more in-depth study and investigation (as opposed to gathering easy to find numbers), but would also have to address basic

conceptual problems in evaluation, problems which, although in different context, were not exactly new, as well as more fundamental problems with scoring.”

Janssen et al (2004, p.7) are critical of the numerous benchmarking studies that look at usage and numbers of online services and try to show that a:

“richer and more qualitative view on the state of eGovernment requires a balanced mix of the different sorts of indicators in order to measure eGovernment supply, eGovernment demand and satisfaction from end users.”

This matches the conclusion of Bowerman et al (2001, p.328) in their study of benchmarking as a government tool, since it “might come to resemble other ‘public management reforms’, where little evidence is brought to bear on the success or otherwise of ‘new’ management approaches and practices for public sector bodies”. For as Bannister (2007, p.171) highlights in his ‘Points for Practitioners’:

“While it is possible to design a benchmark for a broad area like e-government (or even non-e government) which will give a reasonably meaningful comparison, the cost of doing so may be prohibitive. Benchmarks should therefore be targeted to answer specific and narrow questions.”

This was supported by Schellong (2009, p.4) who stated that: “unfortunately, the development of a relevant and universally accepted benchmark for eGovernment will continue to be a challenge around the globe. Many aspects of eGovernment, especially transformation or its impact are difficult to capture”. One such possible benchmark was considered by the UK government in 2007. This was National Indicator 14 (NI14), which is outlined next.

2.3.4. NI14

Even in October 2007 the Department for Communities and Local Government, DCLG (2007b, p.21) was stating that “there is no clear agreement on suitable benchmarking approaches or sustained system of customer insight to establish the lifestyle preferences of citizens for particular channels of communication”. This, however, did not stop the same government establishing a new National Indicator, NI14, DCLG (2007a) that was described as “Avoidable contact: The average number of customer contacts per received customer request”.

This was followed by a draft for consultation in November 2007 of a Handbook of Definitions (DCLG, 2007c). This contained six pages on NI14. This indicator was on its third draft by February 2008, yet still failed to provide a measure that is likely to assist and encourage transformation and instead serves as a target to create league tables from. The final detailed definition provided in April 2008, (DCLG, 2008a) is “Reducing avoidable contact: minimising the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer”.

There is anecdotal evidence that the initial concept of “failure demand” was confusingly close to “demand failure” a concept developed by John Seddon and his colleagues, which could not be treated as a target and also that the Minister objected to the use of the word “failure” in a measure and hence the term used became “avoidable contact”. Guidance on “avoidable contact” was published by the Improvement & Development Agency (2008, p.13) stating that local authorities are being helped to “design services that reflect the needs of customers not arbitrary targets or performance indicators”. The Director General for Transformational Government introduced the document by stating that National Indicator 14 was designed to “develop a deeper understanding of service delivery from the viewpoint of the service user”. In contrast North East Improvement Partnership Customer First Network (2008, p.10) stated: “Our view is that this figure (NI14) is, in fact, of little value (but the Minister wanted one!)”. Another concern is expressed by Patterson (2008, p.178) who asked

whether “the directive to reduce avoidable contact with customers where information is being repeated could instead become a directive to reduce contact to the minimum, leaving citizens unaided and hopes for improved take-up thwarted?”

In April 2010, the UK government removed NI14 from the National Indicator set, meaning that local authorities were no longer required to record or calculate it, DCLG (2010, p.4). However, governments desire ways of ensuring services are delivered effectively and some other approaches follow.

2.3.5. Developing measures

Naylor (2007, p.83) describes the use of metrics by the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and states that “by developing a predictive model we would be able to test not only the financial benefits of a particular investment decision, but the impact on customer satisfaction too”. Further, he confirms (Naylor 2007, p.90) that “At the heart of our approach has been a simple but rigorous commitment to use customer data to inform both the strategic questions we pose and the method through which we answer them”. This is rounded off by one of his main conclusions (Naylor 2007, p.91), that “having finalised our customer service strategy it is also clear that we have only just scratched the surface of the potential customer metrics can play in improving service design and service outcomes”.

Di Maio (2007, p.20) summarises ‘Public Value of IT’ frameworks from the United States, across Europe and Australia and states that “planners in government IT organizations that have no mandated framework should select one that matches most of the Gartner criteria for a good PVIT one”. He then continues to state that “it is essential that the selected framework provide an effective way to communicate value to internal and external stakeholders,

particularly elected and business-side officials". To which the researcher would add that many of the models, whilst perhaps suitable for a large government body, are too complex for many local government bodies and if we are to encourage their use a framework is required which is simple to operate. This was confirmed by a private sector view from Reichheld (2003, p.47), who stated that "Most customer satisfaction surveys aren't very useful. They tend to be long and complicated, yielding low response rates and ambiguous implications that are difficult for operating managers to act on".

As Beynon-Davies & Williams (2003, p.147) identified from their research in Wales, the initial guidance on evaluation "was focused around key performance indicators for electronic service delivery" and that "not surprisingly authorities have directed their short-term plans and strategies at improving front-end processes and systems". This is reiterated by Beynon-Davies & Martin (2004, p.226) who consider local authorities are aiming at incremental change rather than re-engineering processes in a way that might result in transformational change. This is supported by Organ, (2006, p.285), who suggests in his conclusions that "the possibility of changes occurring incrementally and organically should be recognised alongside the appliance of technology in attempting more visible and immediate transformations". This reinforces a view that initial e-government efforts were geared to targets rather than measures. The targets could be fudged by incremental change, whilst 'real world' measures might better support transformation, which the literature continues to propose.

A possibly pessimistic view is presented by Lenihan (2002, p.8) when he suggests that:

"e-government is proving more difficult and costly than first thought and the expected benefits have been slow to materialize. With some notable exceptions, the efficiency gains have been mixed. The boom in e-commerce was short-circuited by the dot-com bust. Is the bloom coming off the e-government rose?"

Another sceptical analysis by Hazlett & Hill (2003, p.451) concludes that “it is by no means certain that e-government can produce truly innovative, responsive public services, indeed it may merely exacerbate electronically, existing shortcomings”. This again suggests the need to resolve the ‘shortcomings’ of a service prior to making it electronic. The pessimism is supported by Gullledge Jr & Sommer (2002, p.375) who conclude their review of business process management by stating that there are cultural issues probably outweighing the incentives.

Di Maio & Kost (2004, p.2) contains a graphical representation of their ‘E-Government Hype Cycle’, which places performance metrics as coming along somewhere around the year 2008. Both these prophecies were accurate, as indicated by documents from the OECD and various governments, although the value of the performance metrics employed is yet to be realised.

At the same time that the 2007 DCLG documents were being issued, as described in Section 2.3.4. NI14, the Cabinet Office published two documents (HM Government, 2007a and HM Government, 2007b), the first a guidance document promoting customer satisfaction and the second a ‘toolkit’ for ‘improving the customer experience in public services’. Importantly, one of the conclusions of the guidance, HM Government (2007a, p.37) was that “applying customer satisfaction measurement techniques is the best way of managing the ongoing demand for improvements in service delivery”. A further report appearing was the Cabinet Office Performance Management Framework for publicly funded contact centres (2008). This is a set of indicators established by central government that all contact centres were expected to report on, including local government, was seen by North East Improvement Partnership Customer First Network (2008, p.6) as “heavily biased towards input measures and gives insufficient guidance on outputs, outcomes and quality measures”.

However, the 'toolkit' is largely about surveying sampled customers. Hence, whilst one government department encourages the measurement of user satisfaction, councils are being told to focus on measuring the number of contacts. This is further contrasted with the publication by the DCLG of a joint document from Institute of Public Finance & North West e-Government Group (2008, p.40), on Understanding the Cost of Local Government, which has portrayed in a diagram the output of 'customer satisfaction' which has resulted from the public service appreciating and meeting the needs of its customers.

In January 2008 a series of reports appeared on the Local Government Association web site in England, produced by various combinations of the Local Government Association (LGA), which represents all local council elected members, the National Consumer Council (NCC) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), which exists to share best practice across local government. Amongst the documents was a review (Tetlow Associates 2006) of the various international measures of customer satisfaction, including the Canadian, American and the European Index of Customer Satisfaction. Importantly one of the key findings (p.6) was that "A new, integrated model for understanding customer satisfaction and experience throughout the sector is urgently needed", along with "current systems for understanding the customer experience are needlessly expensive because they duplicate effort and the results are frequently underused". A further report by the same research company, Tetlow Associates (2008), analysed the international trends along with reporting some of the technical issues, such as drivers for satisfaction, segmentation and customer journey mapping; importantly and unusually they have taken some trouble in providing definitions of customer, consumer, citizen and other possible descriptions, they also state (Tetlow Associates, 2008, p.10) that "good data about the customer experience can tell us not only whether people are satisfied or not, but why, and this can be really helpful in the design of services in the future".

The joint LGA/NCC report resulting from the research, Local Government Association (2007, p.6), had as one of its key conclusions that “key indicators of performance should relate to the capability of local authorities in understanding and responding to their customers rather than relying on simplistic snapshots of comparative satisfaction”. This is also supported by the conclusion from Kelly (2005, p. 82) who states that “public administration can amend its paradigm of entrepreneurial government to expressly include its obligation to meaningfully assess customer satisfaction and the learning and growth of its employees, along with performance standards of productivity and efficiency”. Speller & McCarron (2008, p.2) also support this approach by stating that “far from being an add-on when we are planning services customer satisfaction should be a central aim of the process”.

This echoes the experiences of Joseph, McClure & Joseph (1999) from the banking sector, quoted earlier, that the method of trying to establish public satisfaction from the existing occasional Best Value Performance Indicator questionnaire every year or two can be improved by councils gaining direct feedback. This is supported by Bolton & Drew (1994, p.6) who warn that since “satisfaction is a summary psychological state that soon decays, the timing of the measurement should be soon after the transaction”. In fact, Roch (2004, p. 25) concludes that:

“citizens with low trust in government that monitor government more closely will translate negative personal experiences into negative perceptions of collective-level experiences. The resulting political judgements will have larger degree of bias, and these biased judgements may lead to the creation of an environment in which it is difficult for government to succeed. Thus, this research suggests that what might appear to government officials as changes in the level of citizens’ satisfaction with government services, may in fact be the effect of the changing levels of trust on the relationship between citizens’ perceptions of personal and collective-level experiences.”

This may indicate the lesser value of the general annual or biennial satisfaction surveys and was consistent with the findings of Stipak (1979, p.51), who, in a

statistical study of the potential misuse of citizen satisfaction as a performance indicator, recommended that “to measure the quality of service performance, policy makers should not rely on survey items asking citizens how satisfied they are with particular local services, or asking citizens to evaluate particular local services”. He also concluded that “responses to vague satisfaction or evaluation questions probably reflect at best some unknown mixture of different aspects of service provision”.

These comments support the criticisms of targets raised in the first chapter and in addition that of the lack of baseline data, as also supported by a report from the Irish Comptroller and Auditor General, Government of Ireland (2008, p.96) reviewing issues over their projects requires future projects to provide “a current performance baseline against which results can be measured” (although there is no mention of the customer or client). This is further emphasised by comments of Van Ryzin & Immerwahr (2007, p.218) who state that “less well understood in the public administration literature is how to measure the importance of local government services to citizens”. The authors then argue for the use of “derived importance”, since “research on consumer behaviour... has long recognized that stated importance does not necessarily explain observed variation in overall customer satisfaction”

A further marketing investigation dealing with web sites, McKinney et al (2002, p. 299) has proposed the use of expectation and disconfirmation, a failure in expectation, for web metrics, but this introduces a further range of questions for users and complicates the multi-channel scenario. Hogarth (2004, p.3) believed that “no study has used both qualitative and quantitative approach to analyse consumer complaining behaviour”.

In a review of the literature around Business Process Improvement methodologies for the National Audit Office, Zadnor & Bucci (2008, pp. 6/7) extract seven conclusions of which the three relevant to this thesis are that

customer needs and satisfaction are not the principal drivers for implementation, there is a need to find ways for public sector managers to view their organizations as a system and not “a series of functional processes or activities”, along with “clearer performance measurement and monitoring systems”

A key pointer in seeking metrics is provided by Scott & Vitartas (2008, p.54) who state that:

“The results therefore also suggest that local government bodies need particularly to communicate with and to take into account the comments that are received from those residents who evidence more attachment and more involvement.”

I believe the forgoing sections, particularly Section 2.3.1. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction, present satisfaction as a suitably parsimonious measure, when used in the correct context. However, a further potential method is to measure the gap between the service delivered and that expected, which is considered next.

2.3.6. Gap analysis

Another survey approach is to measure the gap between service expectations and what is delivered, which is explored and described by the Accounts Commission for Scotland (1999, p. 3) which argues that “it is only by explicitly assessing expectations as well as perceptions that we can determine whether there are any service quality gaps in terms of the services we provide”. In a study of the application of the Gaps Model, outlined in Parasuraman et al (1988), Foster & Newman (1998, p.64) concluded that “armed with the survey results, and the insights gained from an application of the Parasuraman et al

(1988) gap framework to these survey results the Borough⁹ has been able to begin to understand its diverse customers' requirements and the shortfalls in the service it delivers". A further supporting view of gap analysis is provided by Silvestro (2005, p.229) who reflects on its possible use as a diagnostic tool in the management of the National Health Service that it might be used to demonstrate whether, over time, "an increase in patient dissatisfaction is due to heightened importance ratings, or due to a decrease in perception levels which might be indicative of reduced service levels". Brown & Swartz (1989, p.96) also supported the gap analysis approach when dealing with professional services which were thought less likely to draw complaining behaviour and hence require a proactive approach in monitoring service quality. However, Vaughan & Shiu (2001, p.142) concluded their research into the use of the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al (1988) in the nonprofit sector and finding it "inappropriate", instead offering another tool consisting of 27 distinct features across 10 dimensions. Care is obviously needed here since managing expectations may result in a loss of trust, just as much as claiming to meet expectations and failing. This was also captured by Al Shamsi (2007, p.23) who stated that:

"Businesses that maintain a customer-centric view of their services and service delivery models, and make a significant effort to adapt these to ever-evolving customer expectations, have the greatest chance of being successful and providing quality services in the eyes of the customer."

This is also supported by Evans & Yen (2005, p.366) suggesting that:

"If governments focus on giving good service and truly consider citizen feedback using the customer relationship management method, there is every probability that the e-government initiative will progress successfully."

Some further relevant issues around expectations are raised by James (2007, p.13) who points to "the support for expectations anchoring and expectations disconfirmation suggest that local authorities may be able to manage

⁹ The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London

expectations to influence satisfaction”, along with “strategies to lower expectations could include explaining to local publics about difficulties in service provision such as problematic socioeconomic conditions or budget and other constraints imposed by outside actors such as central government”, and also that “relatively low average satisfaction scores for some units might be the result of them having relatively high proportions of high expectations individuals, compared to other units”. The challenge of the various aforementioned “gaps” to the roles of managers and politicians was summarized by Milakovich (2003, p.62):

“The challenge for public managers is to measure “gaps” in performance between expectations and perceptions of the service level provided by their agencies. Public managers must identify and fill these gaps, set performance standards to satisfy various users of services and work with elected officials to balance the preferences of widely different individuals and groups, many of who now expect government to be run like a business.”

This was supported by Selber & Streeter (2000, p.11) who stated:

“Since human services are usually delivered within an interdisciplinary teamwork format, consistency about what is to be delivered across the various professionals who interface with the customers is difficult. In addition, this gap occurs when staff do not educate the customers about what is being done on their behalf. This causes uncertainty on the part of customers and impacts their perceptions of services delivered. Inadequate communication, a tendency to overpromise services, or rapidly changing standards are some factors which can produce this gap.”

Which was also endorsed by Flinders (2008, p.33) who concluded that “managing the politics of public expectations – in all its forms – provides a (but not *the* way) way of bridging the gap and revitalising politics”.

In contrast to “expectations”, Lee-Kelley & Kolsaker (2004, p.132) posit “a mechanism for mapping the assumptions gap between the providers of e-services and their users”. They conclude by turning this into a conceptual model

with eight drivers, including commitment and the number and types of services, on the provider side and ten drivers, including expectations and quality, on the user side.

These are also lessons for the design and delivery of services over all channels, which also needs to consider where feedback is received, for as Powers (2002, p.2) points out: “many times customers will lodge complaints with the nearest employee they can find, so organizations could benefit from requesting that employees attempt to capture the complaint as soon as possible”. This may also indicate the need to employ a multichannel system to capture feedback. This concept was developed by McEwen & Fleming (2003, p.2) and Fleming et al (2005, p.8) in their study of the application of the manufacturing industry ‘Six Sigma’ principles to service industry, in particular the Gallup Organization, the latter concluding that “we are confident that measuring and managing two simple factors – employee and customer engagement – can lead to breakthrough improvements in all aspects of your business”.

Comparing the gap models identified, as in Table 2.2, the researcher agreed with Gobadian et al (1994, p.60) who considered that the models are internally focused and do not offer improved quality of service for the citizen.

Table 2.2 – Comparison of models employing gap analysis

Parasuraman et al (1985)	Wood et al (2007)	Speller & McCarron (2008)
Consumer expectation – management perception gap	Consumer expectation – management perception gap	Understanding gap
Service quality specification gap	Performance measurement gap	Design gap
Service delivery gap	Service delivery gap	Service delivery gap
External communication gap	External communication gap	Promise gap
Expected service – perceived service gap	Expected service – perceived service gap	Expected service – perceived service gap
	Internal communications gap	Policy gap

As also stated by Ghobadian et al (1994, p.59):

“It is generally recognised that customers evaluate the service they receive, and their expectations are critically important in determining whether or not they are satisfied. Consequently, the question of how expectations are formed is vital to the provision of quality service.”

The potential complexity of gap analysis across multiple channels has limits in providing a practical solution, but employing the gaps when analysing citizen dissatisfaction can provide a tool for highlighting problems and improving service delivery. However, this must also take regard of the multiple stakeholders in government. Another related but alternative metric is that of the whole “experience” and is considered next.

2.3.7. The citizen’s experience

Fung (2006, p.8) presents the following example: “If the main reason for direct participation is one that John Dewey gave – that the man who wears the shoe, not the shoe-maker, know best where it pinches – then participants need do no

more than complain to policy-makers (Dewey, 1988, p.364)". This should also be a reason for consulting citizens with regards to service quality and process.

The US General Services Administration (2005.p. 92) lists eight practical guidelines around citizen satisfaction information. The first has a quantitative "value" of satisfaction for use as a yardstick against trends, the second proposes using qualitative information for areas where they are not meeting expectations, the third employs satisfaction information to correlate performance against performance metrics to ensure best use of resources. The fourth guideline encourages the use of surveys at the end of a contact or within reasonable timescales.

Kelly (2003), in a review of citizen satisfaction research to that date, concludes with the question of whether:

"the most serious challenge to researchers looking for empirical evidence of a relationship between public service performance and citizen satisfaction is the same that public managers face: finding performance measures that capture service outcomes. In the interim, we should take care not to confuse aspects of service quality and productivity that can be quantified with dimensions of service quality that matter to citizens."

In fact, Van Ryzin et al (2004, p.338) conclude that it is possible, using the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model, to reveal which services have the most influence on citizens' overall judgments of quality rather than on their satisfaction level in general.

Zappen et al (2008, p.19) highlight the fact that "some digital government applications have provided illustrations of how user innovations during system development and after its implementation can contribute creatively to their development". This is taken further by Powers (2002, p.5) stating that:

"by categorizing the complaints into structure and process elements the organization can work toward resolving the complaints by identifying

trends and making necessary improvements to ensure that those complaints do not recur.”

In reality, the exercise of e-government should have been about improving the customer experience whilst making the most efficient use of all possible channels of communication, as stated by Phippen (2007, p.68) “eGovernment will only realise long term potential if it is considered alongside other service delivery approaches (i.e. face to face, telephone interactions), rather than being a special case”. Local authorities and government, unlike banks, do not have the option of driving customers down the most cost effective channel for the supplier and instead have to deliver services in a manner appropriate to their local community, which will entail having a range of channels dependent on need. This can be dependent on the local community being urban or rural, wealthy or poor and various combinations. This is confirmed by the research of King & Cotterill (2007, p.351) who concluded, following an examination of e-government CRM systems that transformation was unlikely, as a result of the changes being service led.

From an American private sector angle Maritz Inc (2006, p.5) state that “The technology ‘fix’ of CRM that promised improvements to the customer experience simply didn’t deliver. Despite the hundreds of millions of dollars invested in technology solutions, a 2006 survey found only that five percent of respondents strongly agreed that technology has improved service quality”. Also, King & Brown (2007, p.72) summarised ICT-enabled citizen-centric service as going through three phases and stating that most are currently struggling with the first. King and Brown do support public dialogue regarding the issues, but appear to lack insight into the realities of whether there is a sufficiency of public desire for services delivered in such a manner.

Any assessment of citizen needs should demand a baseline, to be worthwhile. As in a study by the World Bank from India, Bhatia et al (2009), consider a

range of assessment frameworks internationally¹⁰, prior to concluding with the need for the detailed cost of existing service delivery, along with measuring the service quality: This establishment of a baseline is something absent from the majority of earlier methodologies. Bhatia et al (2009) also developed, from surveys, an assessment framework, shown in Table 2.3:

Table 2.3 – An Assessment Framework for E-Government – Bhatia et al. (2009, p.79)

Goal	Examples of performance Indicators	Key feature of the enabling environment
<i>Outcomes</i>		
Increased efficiency	Financial and time savings in government activities	Overall e-government strategies
-----	-----	-----
Increased transparency and accountability	Public perceptions, such as user satisfaction and score cards	Political and popular support for cross agency coordination and public sector reform
-----	-----	-----
Higher quality public services	Financial and time savings for citizens	Telecommunications infrastructure and cost structures for increasing ICT access
Better access to services	Increased public service timeliness and responsiveness	Supportive legal and regulatory frameworks
	Reduced errors Financial savings per transaction	Balances with competing priorities (such as roads and education)
		Macroeconomic changes
<i>Outputs</i>		
Reengineered processes	Comparisons of old and new business processes	
-----	-----	

¹⁰ including the French MAREVA, the German WiBe, the US Performance Reference Model, the Australian Demand Assessment Methodology and Value Assessment Methodology

New ICT Systems	Technical reviews of IT infrastructure, applications, and performance	
-----	-----	
Increased service coverage	Variety of available services	
	IT support capacity	
	Service training	

It is noted that one of the performance indicators in Table 2.3 includes ‘user satisfaction’. It is also noted that the group of “Outputs” lack a “key feature of the enabling environment” which the researcher, having subdivided the original table for greater clarity, proposes as “user recognizable benefits”.

A Cabinet Office working paper (Delivery and Transformation Group 2006, p.8) agrees that public services are different in that they are often seen as a “necessary but unpleasant chore” along with the fact that government cannot pick and chose its customers. Further, failing to manage processes only results in the added problem of ‘failure demand’, which is also highlighted by Seddon (2007, p.2). In contrast, an outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) delivered by the UK Chancellor in October 2007 was a document entitled the Service Transformation Agreement (HM Treasury 2007, p.3), which stated that:

“the challenge for the public sector is to follow the example of leading private sector providers who have rethought the ways in which they interact with people and businesses to improve customer value and reduce costs.”

Whilst Parker & Heapy (2006, p.97-102) in a report for the Demos think-tank had suggested that as part of CSR07 the Treasury should:

“support all key service departments and local authorities in developing new metrics that focus on quality of experiences, to go alongside operational and customer satisfaction measures; in particular, general

duties of wellbeing, such as those now carried by local authorities, should be accompanied by regular surveys and feedback systems involving direct user feedback focused on quality and on user confidence, both in themselves and service providers.”

This would go alongside adding “to existing requirements to measure customer satisfaction through developing richer metrics of experience”. Neither of these happened. However, one factor in considering service delivery, whether single or multi-channel, electronic or manual, is the actual cost of delivery through the channel or channels being employed. Mechanisms to calculate transaction costs should be considered at the outset of any project and reviewed post implementation.

2.3.8. Cost of service delivery

A frequent argument for the move to electronic service delivery has been the lower cost of it, taking as its model the e-commerce one from the private sector, compared with the face-to-face or telephone-facilitated delivery.

A publication by the Institute of Public Finance & North West e-Government Group (2008) entitled *Delivering Efficiency: Understanding the Cost of Local Government Services* proposed the use of Activity Based Costing as a standard methodology within English local government. This mechanism had been employed to produce demonstration costs identifying radically lower costs for web-enabled transactions compared with both telephone and face-to-face.

There has been a large amount of debate about transaction costs in economic terms, from the Coase theorem (briefly described by Schlafly 2007, p.45: original Coase, 1960) but the lessons learned about the economic free market in the twenty-first century may have discredited this, Schlafly (2007, p.46) states that “the role of government to increase prosperity should focus on *lowering*

transaction costs, not raising them". The difficulty in this context is identifying the transaction costs, which when Dahlman (1979, p.148) extracted them included "search and information costs, bargaining and decision costs, policing and enforcement costs". Fenwick et al (2009, p.452) identified increasing transaction costs as a number of hurdles in the path of e-government. These costs included policing around identity theft and security, but this should not be allowed to impede e-government if there were performance benefits.

But a more detailed consideration of transaction costs for information systems was followed by Ciborra (1993), who had argued that information technology can be used for reducing transaction costs, and then Cordella et al (1997) who accepted the higher initial fixed costs in technology investment but also the potential for information overload increasing costs. Cordella (2006, p.205) delves further into this when he states that "lower transaction costs can be achieved when the costs associated with ICT adoption do not exceed the cost of the externalities that are affected by this adoption". This requires us to ascertain the potential costs in the wider network. This is supported by Peters et al (2004, p.487) who conclude that:

"Many measurement instruments take a too simplistic view and focus on measuring what is easy to measure. Many of the instruments focus on measuring the visible front of e-government and ignore the performance of the cross-agency business processes. None of the instruments focus on multi-service organizations."

Thus, it needs to be accepted that transaction costs are many sided. By reducing its own transaction costs government may be increasing the costs of its partners or those who would transact with it. In the e-government context, amongst the costs to the citizen or business is the ownership of ICT, the ability to employ it and the possession and maintenance of the skills to use it, along with the additional materials needed to complete the transaction, be this time in understanding the system employed or paper and postage costs, such as when the third party has to print and write on a hard copy before returning, that have been transferred. These may all act as deterrents to its application by the

potential user. Similarly government has to recognize the policing costs, being ongoing additional security costs to prevent fraud, computer viruses and electronic attack.

One of the lessons from Canada has been that “integrated channel delivery requires that managers evaluate demand, user satisfaction, and cost across channels and then be able to shift resources among channels” (Borins 2007b, p.379). Similarly, from the US banking sector, Frei et al (1999, p.1219) concluded that “firms should consider investing in process improvement and organizational capabilities that decrease process variation, rather than invest in improvements that make a firm “best of breed” for a single process”. There is also Australian recognition for the wider view with Moore & Flynn (2004, p.67) arguing for “the greater need for government organisations to focus away from looking at channel management as an inside-looking-out activity and towards analysing the interaction experience as an outside-looking-in activity and to broaden the focus to include others in their value network.

However, the use of measures such as NI14 or “avoidable contact” described earlier in Section 2.3.4. NI14, and its possible use in league tables was unlikely to assist in any of these evaluation activities.

There is also the need to consider pilots and scrutiny as indicated in Section 1.4. History in England onwards, along with being mindful of who the end-users are. NPM and post-bureaucratic theory may have obscured the understanding of these matters by the consumerization of the citizen, which is reviewed next.

2.4. The marketization of citizenship

Stahl (2005, p.82) in a consideration of comparisons between e-government and e-commerce identifies the initial problem as that of the “equation of customers and citizens¹¹”, and identifies moral issues resulting. In the UK, as Needham (2003, p.9) pointed out “the language of citizenship has been common currency among our governing politicians in the last two decades, despite the formal designation of Britons as subjects rather than citizens”. The politicians for the last two decades have also brought about the identification of subjects as customers. Table 2.4, from Needham, highlights the differences between the two potential roles.

Table 2.4 – Two models of citizenship – Needham (2003, p.15)

The citizen-consumer	The participatory citizen
Self-regarding	Community-regarding
Reflexive preferences	Preferences shaped by deliberation
Market accountability	Political accountability
Voice as complaint	Voice as discussion
Loyalty to the political community secured through promotional advertising	Loyalty to the political community based on common citizenship
Instrumental attitude to politics: political activity as a means	Non-instrumental attitude to politics: political activity as an end

From this comparison, Needham builds up an argument that “the consumerisation of citizenship damages not only the interests of service users and the community, but the very presumption of a political basis to democratic governance” (2003, p.34). The origin of this may lie with Barzelay (1992, p.117) who proposed a “post-bureaucratic paradigm” with customer and service at its centre, as described by Mainzer (1994, p.362). Pina (2010, p.4) supports this by arguing for “the need to overcome the disengagement and the passive role that citizens as “customers/clients” had in the Anglo-Saxon model of NPM reforms in the 90s”.

¹¹ I would support the definition of citizens employed by Fung (2006, p.25) who, rather than “individuals who possess the legal status of formal citizenship”, chooses “individuals who possess the political standing to exercise voice or give consent over public decisions that oblige or affect them.”

2.4.1. The effect of NPM

The relationship between New Public Management (NPM) and e-government was briefly described in Section 1.5. International perspective, as it affected the US. However, as described by van Deursen & Pieterse (2006, p.1), “in the second half of the 1990’s, most Western countries followed a strategy to improve their public services based on the ideas of New Public Management”.

Dunleavy et al (2006, p.96 ff), place the United States lower down in the international charts in terms of e-government progress, particularly prior to 2000, along with being critical of NPM generally, stating (Dunleavy et al, 2006, p.218 ff), that “key parts of the NPM reform message have been reversed because they lead to policy disasters. And other large parts are stalled”. The aspect of NPM particularly at odds with other aspects of “modernising government” is identified as the outsourcing of the infrastructure on which e-government runs, this is all or part of the information technology in use. This is confirmed by Roy (2006, p.16) who describes the low priority given to information and communication technology prior to e-government, sometimes resulting in their outsourcing, creating major difficulties when the agenda became truly understood. De Walle & Bouckaert (2003, p.908) also concluded that: incomplete assumptions around improving performance and quality have been employed in attempting to develop a better image of government.

A critique of NPM is provided by van Thiel & Leeuw (2002, p.267) who argued that unintended consequences could arise from output measurements of the public sector which, along with invalidating the conclusions, might reduce the performance. NPM is also criticised by Fountain (2001b, p. 60): “the New Public Management draws together simplified fragments of service management from the private sector”. Similarly Kelly (2002, p.10) states that “the claims of good

results from embracing the NPM have been advanced largely either without evidence or with input or output measures (as opposed to outcome measures) as evidence". She also picks out citizen satisfaction as the most relevant outcome measure "based on post-bureaucratic theory". An additional criticism of NPM came from Dunleavy et al (2006, p.484) arguing that "despite moving the administrative furniture around a great deal, NPM reformers were actually very reluctant to undertake more fundamental questioning of administrative processes because of the focus on short-term managerialist savings".

Other commentators are Adcroft & Willis (2006, p. 398) who concluded in their paper that benefits were unlikely to appear from NPM and performance measurement, and that if such practices continued to be brought into the public sector, the lessons learned in the originating sector should be heeded when doing so. Further, Homburg (2004, p.554) recognized that the unity of NPM and e-government was fallacious since the combination with ICT and e-government strategies could result in varied outcomes. In addition, Christensen & Laegreid (2004, p.13) state that "by advocating both centralisation and devolution, NPM contains an inherent contradiction".

Margetts (2006, p.254) recognises the difficulty in delivering e-government brought about by the New Public Management ethos, which had seen the radical outsourcing of ICT contracts at various public bodies, making change difficult. Another critic of NPM, Snijkers (2005, p.2), considers that public administration has values, over and above those in business, and these need to be used to drive the change rather than just implementing the technology. This was supported by Talbot (1999, p.30), who argued that "a specific approach is required in public services that can draw upon, but not slavishly copy, private sector models". This is also supported by Protherough & Pick (2002, p.20) who describe how in the 1970's government reports maintained an awareness of the "distinction" between public and private sector management and operation and

the discouragement of “wholesale transplants” from one to the other due to high rejection factors.

In a brief review of New Public Management, Duggett (2008) makes a number of points including: “time has revealed that the high expectations have not been met”, “because often the NPM thought only in one dimension, that of management efficiency, it forgot or chose not to address the political dimension” and that “practitioners have on the whole been the victims of NPM theory”, since they were encouraged from the centre to employ the tenets of NPM in the public sector and the workers there have been haunted by the resultant impracticalities described. This was also revealed in their critique of NPM by Chadwick & May (2003, p.293) who stated that “e-government may simply turn out to be the latest in a long series of burnt-out hulks that were designed to solve problems with the “efficiency” of public bureaucracies”. Agreement is also found from Bonina & Cordella (2008, p.3) who observe that “the conception of e-government embedded in the NPM domain seems to concentrate mainly on efficiency driven performance measures, neglecting some other political and social implications”. In contrast to the above, Goldkuhl (2008, p.2) denies a clear link between NPM and e-government, despite the volume of support reported.

Stoker (2006, p.42) goes so far as to develop an alternative to NPM stating that:

“new public management is to some extent a response to the administrative inefficiencies associated with traditional administration, whereas public value management has been a response, at least in part, to the narrowly utilitarian character of new public management.”

But this is more to do with deliberative policy than service delivery.

A similar model to that in Table 2.4., but this time from Malaysia, Table 2.5., appears in Abdullah & Kalinan (2008, p 92), which contrasts the producer-

customer model, an inherent construct of NPM, with that of the government-citizen, which sees us returning to the debate from Section 2.4. The marketization of citizenship.

Table 2.5 – Features of the two paradigms – Abdullah & Kalinan (2008, p.92)

Dimensions	Producer-Customer	Government-Citizen
Role	Producer/Provider	Government/Protector
Challenge	Production/Management	Welfare & Safety/Consultation/Balance
Values	Consumerist/Individualistic	Conservationist/Collectivistic
Relationship	Economic	Political/social
Indicators	Productivity/Satisfaction	Support/Participation
Public	Consumer/Recipient/Buyer	Decider/Participant/Tax Payer

Abdullah & Kalinan (2008, p.89) highlight some of the issues with the NPM paradigm in comparison with their own:

“The Government-Citizen Paradigm encapsulates the essence of the Producer-Customer Paradigm but offers more opportunities and scope for the improvement process. It focuses on the services as well as the policies, on the instrumental values as well as social and political values and it serves the customer but also highlights their role as citizens.”

As they further observe on page 90, “the market-based model promotes a contrarian view and value system”. Which is key when considering strengthening participation in democracy. However, even with the reducing influence of NPM, the customer-citizen conflict remains and it is necessary to look further into the difference between the two labels and their use, when attempting to evaluate service delivery.

2.4.2. Citizen or customer

Leith & Morison (2004, p.26) state that; “one should ask oneself how it is that we can move so easily and with such little debate, from citizen/government to customer/government?” This question primarily needs to be asked when

considering private sector models of service delivery metrics. One example was stated by Evans & Yen (2005, p.355) stating that “a more enlightened view has begun in the ranks of government to treat citizens like a customer whose transaction satisfaction is important”. Noticeably, they use the term as a simile and emphasise the importance of satisfaction. Similar customer-like treatment is recognized by Smith & Huntsman (1997, p.311) who state that: whilst the model might focus government staff on “citizen satisfaction”, it constrains the respective view by the citizen of government.

This same concern is found in Graham & Phillips (1997, p.264) who state that “the marketization of the state that results from the dominance of a producer-customer relationship leads to its depoliticization”. In fact, Clarke et al (2007, p.154), having surveyed users of a range of public services and found the preferred descriptions to be “member of the local community”, “Member of the public” and “service user” in that order, concluded that “people using the services do not have any strong inclination towards the identifications offered by terms like consumer and customer”. Considering other terms, although accepting the “commercial connotations” of customer, Goldkuhl (2008, p.3) proposed “client” as the alternative, producing what he labels “user clients” and “general clients”, however, in the researchers opinion, this adds further terminology, rather than clarification.

The “customer” model of marketing is criticised by Merholz et al (2008, p.40), who state that “to cultivate empathy for customers and users, it’s vital that an organization have a realistic view of those people’s lives. We must understand people as they are rather than as market segments or demographics”. Rather than marketing, Protherough & Pick (2002, p.47) pick on “managerialism” as the culprit in this change of terminology by stating that “Now all are ‘clients’ or ‘consumers’ of ‘services’, because in abstract *management* terms their similarities seem to outweigh the enormous differences between real individuals and situations”. This is seen as the employment of semantics for political ends.

The model was also attacked by Van Duivenboden & Lips (2003, p.213) who consider that:

“In practice, most of the time citizens are not aware of the different roles they fulfil in their relationship with government organisations. Hence, in order to gear public service delivery to the needs and demands of citizens, government shouldn’t consider citizens who present themselves at their windows as being either customer or participant.”

In support, Pan et al (2006, p.239) suggest that the introduction of a business management culture into public services may “prompt the public agencies to marginalize their service responsibilities in favour of standard industrial norms”. Further, Pan et al state that “within the civil service, citizens are compulsory members of those public agencies regardless of their business value. The individual interests of every customer must be accommodated separately and equally”. (2006, p.240) In contrast, Schedler & Felix (2000, p.2) deny the reduction in citizens’ rights and duties by the use of the term “customer”, although this reconfirming of the NPM model produces two roles such that they only become customers during specific engagements with the state, but this duplication can only add confusion.

Needham (2006, p.853) contrasts the use of ‘customer’ in the language of local authorities with their lack of a coherent approach to the public, which indicates a need to change, Needham (2006, p.858), concludes that “policy-makers should pause in their advocacy of customer care until its desirability for public service is more firmly established”, since she highlights the contradiction between the service user as a customer and the political basis of the relationship between representative and represented, which may indicate the need for care by researchers. Mosse & Whitley (2006, p.17) echo this:

“While the metaphorical recasting of citizens as customers is understandable in terms of the need to provide more responsive services, the consequences and dangers of this re-identification are manifold. Fundamentally, the idea of citizen as customer is embedded within the idea of government acting in a market. Laws of supply and demand and consumer choice are not possible in a government context.

The idea of equality, sacrosanct in the public sector, is not possible in a market environment.”

This was earlier pointed out by Fountain (2001b, p. 71): “the customer satisfaction metaphor ignores and weakens the critical roles of representation and trusteeship intrinsic to both public officials and the public” and “the growing incursion of market metaphors into political life may further the already disturbing erosion of civic responsibility and civic engagement”. This was echoed by Yang (2005, p.9) who states that:

“The lack of studies in assessing the contribution of e-government to citizen involvement is not surprising. Although many theoreticians emphasize the potential role of e-government in citizen participation and citizen competence, e-government in practice is equated with online service delivery for the purpose of economy, efficiency, and responsiveness. The vision of e-government often includes terms such as ‘citizen-centred,’ but citizens are treated as customers and customer satisfaction, not citizen participation, is the real emphasis.”

This is also noted by Richter, Cornford & McLoughlin (2004, p.213) who debate the issues around treating the citizen as customer and examining customer satisfaction, since this may have the potential to devalue their role as citizens, along with the role of the public servants serving them. In Cornford & Richter (2007, p.43) this is further developed by a proposal that until government achieves the correct model of the customer, rather than its own representation of them, there will be no success and that authorities need to better engage with the users of services to understand their actual needs and not assume it knows. This was further identified by Craig et al (2009, p.14) who stated that:

“While citizens look to supermarkets, for example, for timely, friendly service, what they most want from public services is knowledgeable staff that provide high-quality advice. Public services need to be better at helping people to help themselves.”

Sakowicz (2003, p.4), whilst seeking “an integrated model of evaluation of e-government” and requiring it to include “the four domains of e-services, e-management, e-commerce and e-democracy”, also identifies public services as

more than a service industry. A number of differences between the two have already been highlighted but in particular these are that in most cases government cannot pick and chose those it deals with nor can the user pick and chose its supplier and both parties have distinct legal obligations on them to deliver and receive whatever is involved, such as paying or collecting taxation, to regulating behaviour and being regulated.

Nevertheless, as McKevitt (1998, p.38) points out,

“Customer complaints in the private sector are an important source of management data for the improvement of service quality: the traditional public sector attitude has been to ignore complaints from service recipients, that is, citizens.”

Fountain (2001b, p. 64) provides another key pointer in saying: “effective service firms harvest complaints and suggestions by linking complaint handling units with operations and development units”. This is confirmed by the Aberdeen Group (2007, p.12) who state in the sixth of six steps to improve call centre and service activities: “Formalize post-service survey efforts. Measure how your customers and end users view the service you provide. Actively survey them for feedback and implement process changes as necessary to stave off customer satisfaction issues”. These approaches present both an interesting turn on the customer as citizen as service recipient and the potential benefit from the dissatisfaction feedback, which is supported by Schneider & Bowen (1999, p.35) who have discovered that “current studies attribute a higher degree of emotionality to the opposite end of the satisfaction continuum – that is, to dissatisfaction – than was true in the past”.

According to NWEgg (2007, p11) Chorley Borough Council have described four types of customer in ‘citizen’, ‘business’, ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘public interest group’. Only the first two of these fit into the private sector models available. This research also directed them to develop concepts of “citizen need” and the “circle of need”, from the hierarchy described by Maslow (1968),

which is echoed by Seddon (2008, p. 168) who asks, as one of three questions into studying demand, “Are there groups of citizens who can be identified from the demands they place on the system and can we design against the variety of these demands in a more systematic way?” The hierarchy of needs is also taken up by Schnieder & Bowen (1999, p. 37) who state that “Expectations can be satisfied; needs are such that continuous gratification yields enhanced states of well-being – pleasure or delight”, which leads them to conclude that “Aggressively pursuing customers with problems is the best form of market research. Companies should get to know the customers who have experienced a problem or expressed dissatisfaction”.

The contrast between citizen and client or customer was strongly made in the establishment of the Canadian Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurement Tool (Schmidt & Strickland 1998, p.2), where a customer is seen to have choice whereas the citizen has duties as a member of a community of purpose and the clients are direct recipients of services. However, although this is part of the fundamental work carried out in Canada, as for example in Tait (1996, p.31) which states that “the concept of “customer” is quite different. The customer, as customer, does not share common purposes with a wider community, but seeks instead to maximise his or her own individual advantage”. No other body elsewhere appears to be particularly concerned to separate them, possibly as a result of following the US lead with NPM.

The difficulties presented by the identification of the public service user as a consumer, when services are based on collective provision was raised in the seminal text by Deakin & Wright (1990, p.9) and they propose that a good public service pays attention to both the user as citizen and the user as consumer, along with the user as worker! By contrast Aberbach & Christensen (2005, p.241) argue that “consumer orientation weakens control by political leaders over administration”. The debate was developed by Denhardt &

Denhardt (2000, p.555) in their critique of New Public Management where as the fourth of seven lessons they propose that:

“The public interest results from a dialogue about shared values, rather than the aggregation of individual self-interests. Therefore, public servants do not merely respond to the demands of “customers“, but focus on building relationships of trust and collaboration with and among citizens. [...] Government also serves those who may be waiting for service, those who may need the service even though they are not actively seeking it, future generations of service recipients, relatives and friends of the immediate recipient, and so on. There may even be customers who don’t want to be customers – such as those receiving a speeding ticket.”

This is potentially further complicated when attempting to transfer the model of customer, as used in CRM systems, where they are viewed, according to Murthi & Sarkar (2003, p.1361) as prospects, customers, supporters and advocates in the private sector segmentation, which is also unlikely to fit a flexible multi-channel public sector operation.

Moore (2003, p.6) deals with this issue by splitting customers into “upstream” and “downstream” types. The “upstream” ones are the government, the donors or perhaps even the tax payers, whilst “downstream” are the ones who receive the service or benefit. Whilst English local government doesn’t split up so neatly the comparison does enable the contrasting requirements of the “upstream” and “downstream” customer, since the “upstream” government or tax-payer may not wish the “downstream” customer to be satisfied, but to themselves create social or public value. Pagnato (1997, p.402) proposed that:

“Customer-driven governmental administration will be viable only if it does not undermine the principle that that public administration is grounded in public law rather than modelled on the entrepreneurial concepts of the private sector. Only if customer service methods are employed cautiously in government units will erosion of the chain of democratic accountability from electorate to elected officials to administrators to citizen-customers be prevented.”

This has the support of Bekkers & Homburg (2007, p.380), who state that the challenge for e-government is to develop participative forms of electronic service delivery and to address citizens at the same time as their identities as consumer, voter, and a Good Citizen or “citoyen”.

By contrast Arnstein (1969, p.217) proposed a “ladder of citizen participation”, essentially a hierarchical model of what roles citizens had or were permitted. At the bottom, labelled “nonparticipation” were those who were manipulated or receiving therapy as a part of their education, the next levels described as “tokenism” were respectively “informing”, “consultation” and “placation”. On the ladder above these and reaching “partnership”, “delegated power” and “citizen control” were those considered to have “citizen power”. The observed difficulty comes about with what power our customer or citizen has to change or improve the service they receive. In the Arnstein model this would only be on achieving the “citizen power” level, whilst the employment of the “customer” model appears tokenistic. This might be seen to have been developed further in the conclusion by Schachter (1995, p.536) that:

“an efficient, responsive government can never emanate solely from reinventing public institutions. The harder task is to reinvent ourselves as active citizens. We are in trouble to the extent that human nature or the complexities of our society preclude our taking an ownership role. Without our participation, any attempt at reform will have at best a very partial success.”

In view of the fact that the individual is likely to have no alternative but to deal with the government, it is more appropriate to consider the government service user as a citizen, rather than a customer. Therefore the question arises: does a different set of game theory need to be developed? Assuming that Hirschman (1970) is correct, along with the political model proposed by Gehlbach (2006), and dissatisfaction is enacted either by ‘voice’ or ‘exit’, it is important for those in power to provide the opportunity for the customer/citizen to express their opinion with reasonable ease, since the exit act will be expressed against the controlling political power through behaviours such as tax avoidance, rioting or

leaving the state. Although considering public service at the level of delivery of “public goods” fails to capture the essence of modern public service, probably due to the level of public service available at that period in the USA. In fact, according to Van Ryzin (2004, p.15), in his description of work by Lyons et al (1992), they had developed a five item scale by including satisfaction and neglect with exit, voice and loyalty, which he tested and found worthy of further research in a multi-dimensional scale, given improvements to wording of questions (Van Ryzin 2004, p.25). In fact, Marquand (2004, p.60) argues that in the public sector, unlike the private, relationships are necessarily long-term due to the unavailability of the “Exit” option and that accountability can only come through “Voice”, although what he describes as “neo-liberals” deceptively promote “Exit” as a choice by marketization. A further extension of the voice/exit options was described by Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley (2007, p.72) with citizens being:

“Essentially a captive audience for the government, irate citizens can not only withdraw their participation, but their negative comments can deter others thinking of e-government engagement. It is imperative, therefore, that G2C offers users unambiguous, overt value and high-quality service experience. Technology-enabled modernisation, therefore, must offer not only modern technology, but a “modernised”, user-centric level of service.”

Hence, it is not only the citizen who may exit, but also their friends, family and anyone hearing of their experience. However, as suggested by van Duivenboden & Lips (2003, p.213) an alternative outcome of facilitating the “voice” option is that government bodies develop their services and processes by listening to what their citizens require. In fact, van Duivenboden (2005, p.437) had proposed a solution to some of the problems observed:

“Co-active service delivery implies that government agencies and citizens do each other a service in return every time they contact. When citizens are provided with a permit, a subsidy or relevant information – or even when they are given a ticket for speeding -, they should be facilitated to give specific feedback or suggestions on the services delivered, the policy program that they are based on or the way services are provided.”

This is supported by Craig et al (2009, p.6) who state that:

“The relationship between choice and voice in public services is complex, but at times they conflict. Where people are more able to voice concerns about poor local services, they may also be more loyal to them, and strategies for public services need to face up to this tension.”

van Duivenboden & Lips (2003, p.224) also raise the issue that additional channels also increase the opportunities for “voice”, both inside and outside the organization, with the potential for participation in policy. Unfortunately, in an Ipsos-MORI (2008) poll in the UK, less than 20% of people surveyed felt that they had an influence over how public services are delivered. This demonstrates something of a democratic deficit in the manner that public services are delivered, having already seen nearly ten years since the Modernising Government White Paper, and e-government commencing. Interestingly, this question was never asked again, whether this was because the question proved unsuitable, or as a result of the answer, is not known.

The proposal by van Duivenboden (2005) for “co-active” serviced delivery considered above, whilst providing the opportunity to improve services, may also direct the services to the louder voices, or privilege the already privileged, which may result in or reinforce digital exclusion. This, along with envisaging the effects that marketization of government service delivery may have, leads to a discussion of where consideration of social inclusion and exclusion might fit within changes or measurement of service delivery mechanisms.

2.5. Digital inclusion and exclusion

Fairweather and Rogerson (2006, p.179), in emphasizing the moral obligation facing government when developing e-government consider that:

“While there are benefits to be gained from the provision of e-government facilities to citizens, governments should be wary of e-

government implementations that mainly or exclusively benefit those who are already advantaged, and should be actively seeking ways to ensure the benefits (whether direct, or through cost savings) spread to the full range of citizens.”

The rationale for this was explained by Letch & Carroll (2007, p.2207) who state that “particular care is needed when e-government initiatives decrease flexibility of front-line public servants to adapt policy in order to meet the needs of the marginalised”. Stevenson (2005, p.2) warns of the “black holes” within the “informational economy” that are occupied by “people who are socially and culturally out of communication with mainstream society”. Whilst Cordoba & Midgley (2008, p.127) warn that “continuous emergence of people and their concerns, and the reinforcement of these exclusions, has been called *marginalisation*”. The latter two papers are clearly not attempting to pick out any particular groups, since it is the act of “marginalisation” by the employment of particular service mechanisms that does that.

In an interview Oscar A. Ornati, Professor of Manpower Management at New York University (quoted in Deming 1986, p.198) states that:

“We have forgotten that the function of government is more equity oriented than efficiency oriented. The notion that we must be “efficient” in the same way in both sectors is fallacious. For government, efficiency must be subsumed to equity. If we do not keep equity in the forefront of the public sector, we will destroy our society. It is unfortunate that we tend to lavish so much praise on management specialists who laud the techniques of private sector management in the public sector.”

A joint Parliamentary and industry report, EURIM (2008, p.2) confirms this:

“It is too crude an approach to seek savings simply by replacing face-to-face services with Internet access to services that might engage more time-poor citizens. Many of those in most need (at least 20% of the overall population and a majority of the elderly) are physically unable to use a conventional screen and keyboard, even if they wished to.”

As part of a report focused on the future of the broadcast media but relevant to all public communications, Tambini (2006, p.123) stated:

“a market-failure approach, particularly one that neglects or underestimates the role of citizen, social and public value, is likely to be indifferent to the key tipping points where digital exclusion begins to seriously undermine citizenship. Even notions of public, social value or externalities do not take an overall view of the level of overlapping inequalities and the extent to which they undermine citizenship *per se*. A notion of rights, and one that sees information citizenship as a relative poverty issue, is the best long-term framework to ensure that communications in the UK perform their integrative, democratic role.”

Even where the market hasn't failed, there are other circumstances that limit take-up of electronic services, as recognized by a UK government consultation on digital inclusion (H.M. Government 2008, p.27), which stated that “it is often noted that access alone is not enough. People still need motivation and skills to use technology”. This was highlighted from the Netherlands by van Dijk et al (2007, p.164) stating that “citizens do not exchange traditional channels of service provision for electronic channels as fast as some government suppliers seem to think”. Even when using them, consistency is not guaranteed for, as stated by Helbig et al (2009, p.92), “people also use technologies differently because they are situated within various contexts or intersecting factors (age, gender, race, etc.)”

Ebbers et al (2008, p.190) divided the Western population into three rough groups, the third of which they described as the “digital illiterates”, of which they state:

“The unconnected and the non-users form about one third (30%) of the populations in developed high-tech societies. With no access to computers and the Internet, they only use digital media such as television, telephones, and audiovisual equipment. Within this group, the elderly (over 65), unemployed women, people with little education, people with low income, disabled people, and migrants or members of ethnic minorities are over represented. A large proportion of these groups lacks the motivation, the resources, and the skills to use computers, the Internet, and complicated other digital media.”

This is, in part, supported by Cullen (2004, p.25) who concluded that:

“the new disadvantaged are more likely to be immigrant and refugee communities, and long-term beneficiaries who could well be further marginalized by the introduction of e-government into a subculture of exclusion.”

The reality of web site use was highlighted in the summary of a survey of Jobcentre Plus users in the UK in 2007 by Nunn et al (2009, p.74) who stated that:

“The website was not used by many respondents because they did not have internet access or computer literacy. The dissatisfaction experienced with this channel was contributed to by the lack of online experience and computer skills.”

Yang & Rho (2007, p.1201) emphasized the educationally-excluded when they state that “89% government websites are not easily accessible because the sites read at a higher level than an eighth grade level of literacy, while half of Americans read at no better than an eighth grade level”. This may be paralleled across the industrialised world. From a different approach, Sahraoui (2007, p.54) proposes an argument that:

“access and accessibility are maximized with the telephone as people seem to have developed telephone access skills across the social spectrum whereas accessibility is thought to be a recurrent problem with the web. ... this puts an added strain on e-government developers to channel government services through this restrictive channel.”

This is a reason for maintaining access to human-mediated services, especially since many of the “digital illiterates” are the ones in need of services, use combinations of services and have complex needs. Research in Germany (Niehaves et al, 2008, p.1221) amongst the digital divide groups concluded that “missing personal contact, concerns about data security, and the complexity of services are considered as major reasons for eGovernment non-usage”. However, Foley (2008b, p.12) tested the hypothesis about frequency of use and

willingness to use electronic channels and failed to find an association. In contrast when looking at the elderly, Foley, (2008b, p.7), found that:

“older people are less inclined to use digital technologies than younger people. This has important implications for service designers. Strategies requiring channel migration to significantly reduce the use of (or possibly close down) conventional channels in order to yield major efficiency gains will compromise inclusiveness. New channel uptake will have to be targeted at those with the greatest propensity to migrate and traditional channels will have to continue to be made available to older people and others unwilling to migrate.”

Following Sen’s capability approach, Zheng & Walsham (2008, p.239), conclude that:

“Social exclusion in the e-society needs to move beyond the distribution of ICT among the population, and the inequality of socio-economic status behind it. If the e-society is expected to be a better place than earlier societies, it will not be just the digital technology that makes the difference. Rather, it would be the utilization of the flow of information and channels of communication which potentially enhance people’s freedom to pursue a life that they have reason to value, including participating in economic, social and political activities. Conceiving social exclusion as inequality in different spaces, or different types of capability deprivations, the capability approach provides a lens to address the complexity and multiplicity of the phenomena in the e-society.”

In the USA, Mossberger et al (2008, p.149) confirm and contrast the need to be aware of Internet usage changes saying that “if Internet use enhances civic engagement and political participation, then exclusion from digital citizenship exacerbates existing inequalities that are based on race, ethnicity, income, and education”. This mirrored the view of Hudson (2002, p.526) who stated that “a genuinely egalitarian approach to e-government therefore requires a genuine commitment to universal Internet access from the home”. Ignoring the digitally-excluded, whether by volition or education, there is then a further question as to whether the design of government services for delivery, should be for narrowband users, permitting the greatest number, but if designed around broadband, this would then require universal access to broadband. A partial lesson had, presumably, been learned by the time of the final report on Digital

Britain (2009, p.211) which stated that “a roadmap to the future delivery of Digital Government will need to consider how and to whom the services are targeted and whether an online only or a multi-channel approach is needed, rather than a one size fits all approach”. This relates to the learning from Canada, where Marson & Heintzman (2009, p.25) reveal:

“One of the remarkable changes in service delivery in recent years has been the increased use of multiple channels to complete a service experience. Ten years ago, many observers assumed that new channels such as the Internet would displace or even eliminate other traditional service channels. Not only has this not occurred, but in fact increased use of electronic service over the Internet may increase usage of other channels, such as the telephone.”

This demonstrates that the UK still has some way to go to meet with the research conclusions from elsewhere in the world, indicating the possible benefits of co-production, in particular those of Dugdale et al (2005, p.117), who proposed employing the excluded citizens in the design of e-government in the likelihood that inclusion would result.

In the examination of inclusivity when considering the delivery of government services, there is also a need to consider whether gender might play a part, especially considering the newer channels and this is examined next.

2.5.1. The role of gender

It might be expected, in the UK, that along with class, age and education there might be a variation in channel usage by gender, however, Dwivedi and Williams (2008, p.270) found that the “gender gap” was not supported by their research, or that of a number of others. However, dependent on channel used, developers will need to be aware by service type, of the way current gender preferences may operate against channel usage when considering channel management. A warning, in terms of employing the Internet for government

consultation, is a study by Brabham (2008, p.86) who states that for crowdsourcing (the issuing of a call across the Internet to assist in design or assistance from the world at large) “applications that do succeed through the might of a homogenous crowd are reproducing the aesthetic and values of white straight, middle-class men”. The parallels arise between crowdsourcing and using the Internet for government consultation because the audiences, given the existing Internet user base, are likely to be similar and exclude the elderly, the poor, those of colour, those with disabilities *and* women.

However, most recently, analysis by Foteinou (2010) of EU Eurostat¹² data revealed an average gap between 6 and 7 percent between male over female usage of e-government applications between 2005 and 2009. This did not apply to the former Eastern European states, where the gap reversed. This result may be down to the nature of the few e-government applications chosen for the analysis, the way the services are delivered in the different states, and the fact that the data is survey data, although statistically significant. It is also believed that there may be some affect from local legislation around gender, rather than the applications themselves. However, this exemplifies the need to be bias-free when designing service delivery, but that legal constraints may reduce usability.

2.5.2. The ethics of digital inclusion and exclusion

As outlined by Sen (2009) in the wider context, there is a clear necessity, when considering service delivery, to reflect on it within a concept of justice in a democratic society from multiple viewpoints, and then make decisions about how services are delivered from such a panoptical approach. Examining

¹² Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union situated in Luxembourg. Its task is to provide the European Union with statistics at European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home>

measures from this approach offers potential measures such as public value and social capital.

2.6. Public value and social capital

Kraemer & King (2003, p.6 ff) argue, in a paper that lays out four propositions as to why ICT is secondary to political will in producing administrative change, that “the reform hypothesis is fundamentally misguided because it assumes that organisational elites want their organisations to change, and that they are willing to use IT to accomplish such change”. They suggest, rather, that the reforms have to be well established, that ICT applications seem to reinforce existing structures, that potential benefits have not been evenly distributed and that managers, whilst having a good sense of the potential uses of ICT in their own interests, push it when these coincide with the Government’s. This is confirmed by Fountain (2006, p.22) in her conclusion, where she states that “the adversarial model of democracy does not align well with new possibilities for structuring information in government”. Kraemer & King (2003) further question both whether reform is required and that ICT can be used to carry out any reform. They also point out that where it has been used it has a poor record. Instead ICT should be brought “carefully into consideration” following the establishment of “broader goals” and “new models”.

The above hypotheses appear to connect with the sociological theories discussed by Heeks (2004, p.8) around discourse in the public sector where we have the alternatives of espoused theory and theory-in-use potentially resulting in ‘undercover’ practices by politicians or organizations rather than ones before the public eye. Whilst Heeks’ experience is concentrated in the ‘third world’, there is no reason whilst similar behaviours should not occur generally.

According to Horton (2006, p.503): “the origins of the concept of social capital can be traced back to 1916 in its first usage; since then it has attracted a number of proponents”. Social capital is identified by Fountain (2001a, p.71 ff) as the means to encourage reform on the scale and of the type to bring about the success of the virtual state and it is for researchers to build and maintain it using the web. At the same time, whilst she is adamant that public management must change its ways it needs to be recognised that outsourcing architecture is effectively outsourcing policymaking and governments need to be careful. Lyons (2007, p.65) took a different definition of social capital, a key element being ‘neighbourliness’, but the requirement for it at a government level can still be seen in that report. A review of the literature around social capital (National Statistics 2001, p.21) examined many definitions but concluded that whilst it has a relationship with the outcomes policy makers seek, it is neither a panacea nor may more of it make things better, and that specific types of social capital are needed in particular circumstances. Whilst, Aldridge et al (2002, p.73 -74), concluded that:

“Social capital should be seen as giving policymakers useful insights into the importance of community, the social fabric and social relations at the individual, community and societal level. As such, it can open up a range of new policy levers but it is not a simple or single magic bullet for solving all policy problems.”

Another view of social capital is taken by Roy (2006, pp.87- 88):

“This emphasis on collaboration explains the application of the term ‘social capital’, as a proxy for trust, to organizational and managerial dynamics in a more knowledge-driven and digital age that are based more on collaboration than on traditional forms of public sector coercion and control.”

A further approach by Grimsley et al (2007, p.181) builds on a model for community development with social capital being one of four types of capital, along with manufactured, human, and environmental and also being the glue that holds the others together.

Johnston & Percy-Smith (2002, p.330 ff) argue that the lack of agreement over a definition of social capital makes measuring it difficult and that “the status of social capital should more accurately be characterised as chaotic, while at times it operates as little more than a warm metaphor or a vaguely suggestive heuristic device”. Callaghan & Wistow (2006, p.587) employ Bourdieu’s account of the four forms of capital including economic, social, cultural and symbolic, in their study of decision making in health care, which they find gives the citizen a different basis for participation from the consumer, this may provide further reasons to differentiate the citizen from the consumer in the government service delivery context.

A related concept may be ‘Public Value’ described by Kelly, et al (2002, p.4) as ‘the value created by government through services, laws, regulation and other actions’, which they contrast with New Public Management by the latter’s use of ‘easy-to-measure’ metrics. Whilst customer satisfaction is a requirement of public value. Di Maio (2007, p.4), has used the term as part of a study of central government frameworks, as it takes in more than purely the business value and Grimsley, et al (2006, p.5) in their study of public value in an e-government project, accede that “the most common subjective measure is satisfaction”, although they consider it might suffer from a framing effect due to overlap of relative attributes between it and dissatisfaction. Further support for the public value concept comes from Lau (2004, p.5) who suggests that:

“improving service quality through the development of E-Government service provision could have a significant impact on increasing public value and thereby improving confidence and satisfaction with government.”

He further suggests that it may be partly measured by “using service uptake as a proxy measure”. This research has considered “satisfaction” as just such a proxy measure. In support of public value as a target for e-government (rather than the 100% of all services) Kearns (2004, p. 17) also makes user satisfaction one of the elements of it, while requesting increased funding to be for business

process change rather than for technology. However, Saxby (2006, p.1) reports that “we are told that the shift towards transformation of public service adds a new dimension of ‘public value’ to the equation” almost automatically.

In his key text about public value, Moore (1995, p.55) doesn’t define it but suggests how it is calculated in individual circumstances:

“Specifically, the policies that guide an organization’s activities must reflect the proper interests and concerns of the citizens and their representatives; the story about the value to be produced must be rooted in accurate reasoning and real experience; and the real operating experience of the organization must be available to the political overseers through the development of appropriate accounting systems that measure the performance and costs of the organization’s performance.”

This is clarified later, where Moore (2003, p.6) states that “Nonprofit managers, ..., need non-financial measures to tell them whether they have used their financial resources as effective means for creating publicly valuable results”. Seddon (2008, p.162) describes the introduction of the concept of public value into the English public sector and discusses the measurement of it, to which he concludes Moore was unable to find a satisfactory solution. He also argues that what it means in reality is managing economic value, along with understanding how to improve services. This is supported by Bonina & Cordella (2008, p.8) who “suggest that the effects of these e-government policies, either positive or negative, have to look at the impact on the national public value rather than on the efficiency gains ICT can have on the service delivery channels”. A definition that supports that separation of citizen from customer is derived from Alford’s (2002, p.339) approach from a social exchange theory:

“Public value is necessarily consumed or enjoyed collectively, which is why the citizenry’s choices about it are collective ones. In its more austere form, it comprises benefits that individuals can receive only through collective provision, such as law and order (without which the market cannot function), and remedies to market failures, such as public goods, externalities or distributional inequity.”

This reveals the collective nature of the exchange in order for it to be social or public. This was also employed by Smith & Huntsman (2007, p.317) in their comparison of customer, owner and value models of citizens concluding with the latter containing both public servants and citizens “as stakeholders who have common interests in increasing the worth of the community”, and hence in the researcher’s view demonstrating the necessity for co-production when developing or measuring services. This, in turn, is exemplified by Bertot & Jaeger (2008) who, after listing a range of what they considered to be the iterative processes required of “citizen-centred E-Government”, argued that it required “commitment, a desire to measure citizen service quality, and a willingness to implement the lessons learned” and (Bertot et al 2008, p.141) “to constantly look for opportunities to determine the degree to which services meet user needs”. This was confirmed by the conclusion to Grimsley & Meehan (2008, p.40), that lists the drivers of public/social value for a particular study. These included: ease of use, assistance where needed, along with assistance in understanding why others may have positive outcomes when they do not.

This existing lack of awareness in these matters was identified by Pratchett (1999, p.732) who saw “a diminishing cognisance in public organizations of the value of social capital which is associated with democratic participation and a declining competence among governments to act as the focus for public policy making”. This lack of awareness of what social capital might provide and the resulting effect on representative politics may be considered when reviewing e-government developments. Pratchett (1999, p.747) also concluded that:

“The bias towards service delivery and away from other roles means that local authorities are investing significant resources into systems which only support one of their three roles¹³ in the modern polity. Moreover, these investments are creating functional and structural legacies which will be difficult to overturn in the foreseeable future, not least because the

¹³ The other two roles Pratchett had identified (1999, p. 733), in addition to being a “*provider of services*” were “as the champion of *local democracy*; as the focus for *public policy making* in the locality.”

shortcomings of existing applications inevitably create an ongoing demand for their revision or replacement.”

The absence of ‘public values’ from the literature on public administration is raised by Bannister & Connolly (2009, p.110) who have listed their components for exploration as:

- Fairness
- Impartiality
- Political neutrality
- Honesty
- Independence
- Willingness to speak truth to power
- Commitment to the public good

These are human values, and as such probably unmeasurable, but demonstrated by behaviours in the public sphere, might encourage or discourage participation.

It is unlikely from the preceding that social capital or public value present themselves as suitable metrics. However, citizen satisfaction may act as a workable proxy measure, for as stated in Scott et al (2009, p.3) considering the Stoker (2006) development, “In assessing public value from this perspective the measurement of user satisfaction is essential”.

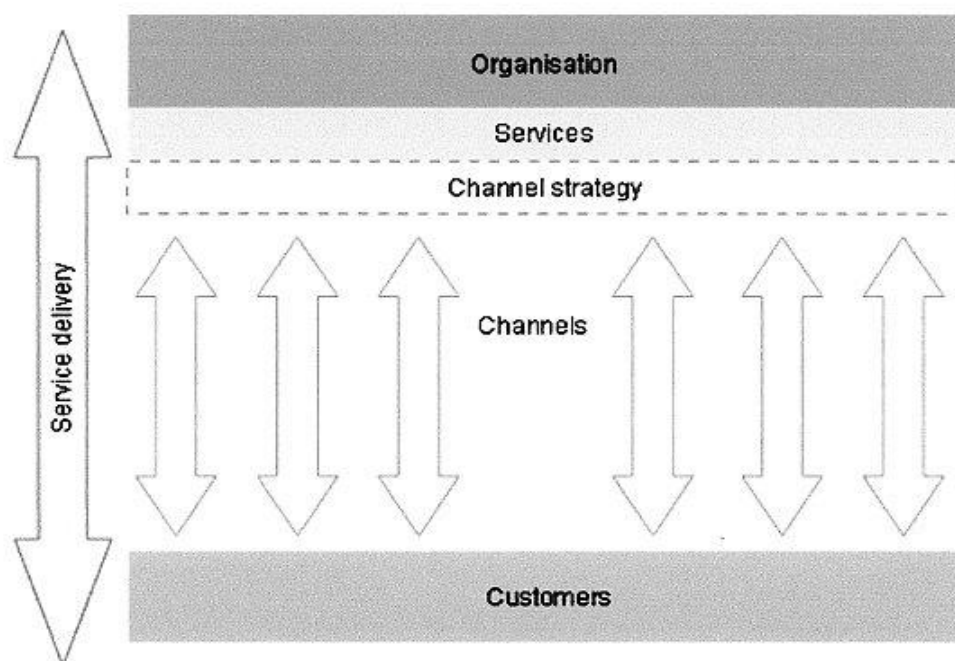
2.7. Later developments

Since the start of this research in 2007, e-government has moved on. Scholl (2010) has made available an Endnote library of 3,690 peer-reviewed papers referring to electronic government. Thus, the volume of research has vastly increased since 2007 (cf Section 2.1. Introduction).

In a practical context, by the latter half of 2009 some of the lessons concluded from the research and published through the research instruments had started to enter mainstream government thinking (coincidentally or otherwise) and the first of a series of reports, Cabinet Office (2009), is such an example, being entitled “Channel Strategy Guidance”. This included a figure, Figure 2.1., that resembled the one developed for this research¹⁴ that had been in the public domain since January 14, 2008 (albeit with some important differences, such as the absence of feedback loops and a channel strategy box replacing the performance layer). The lack of such loops, along with the performance layer, demonstrates a major difference in approach. This research is advocating continuous monitoring of usage by, and feedback from, the citizen to develop services across all channels. By contrast, the model in Figure 2.1. is entirely reliant and focused on an existing strategy, which demonstrates inflexibility, whether the strategy is based on any citizen feedback or not. The model is positive in that it recognizes service delivery as occurring end-to-end, and with the possibility of many channels, but is organization-focused in that it fails to provide the user or citizen with any information about improving or changing services. It also appears to not provide services with necessary feedback from their users.

¹⁴ The figure developed for this research can be seen at Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.1 – Cabinet Office, Channel Strategy Guidance (2009, p.13)



In addition, it had become apparent to the Cabinet Office (2009, p.6) that “it is critical to remember that users of different channels have different needs, drivers and experiences, and that services need to be designed with these in mind”. It was also revealed that “the [Contact] Council’s¹⁵ aim is to build a comprehensive channels performance data ‘dashboard’ to aid departments and other public sector organisations to create and implement effective channel strategies”.

This was also being picked up further away as support for changes to performance monitoring are foreseen by the European Commission (2009, p.14), in a vision for 2020, which states that:

“Performance monitoring of government services will move from the present top down, process driven approach of setting targets and defining measurements towards a more user-centric and output-driven approach. This will incorporate more accountability of local needs and

¹⁵ A body organized by the UK Cabinet Office - The Contact Council has oversight of all customer contact in the public sector.

organise feedback loops involving front line staff and users of government services themselves.”

Millard (2008, p.13), similarly, forecasts that:

“These trends are also likely to see a strong move away from sole reliance on process targets (such as number of cases handled) towards a focus on constituent target, like satisfaction and service fulfilment. This will be a decisive move away from Weberian bureaucracy, where due process within strict rules was all important, to allowing detailed front-line adaptation and decision-making within an overall framework of policy, legal and financial rules. This reflects wider performance management trends away from process measurement, so that, rather than seeking results in better processes for their own sake, ensuring that public sector performance directly and overtly serves public value instead will become the main focus of policy making and measurement.”

In a review of e-government by the OECD (2009, p.25), a change of emphasis can also be seen: “the focus in public service delivery should be on user needs, demands, and satisfaction – not on the tools and service delivery channels governments have been focusing on since the mid-1990s”. They take this further, emphasising that “the progressive [sic] from a government-centric e-government paradigm towards a user-centric paradigm requires a revision of and an agreement on the overall purpose and functioning of the public sector as a whole”. The repeated employment of the term “paradigm” presumably indicates a potential major shift in governmental policies. In order to deliver services in the mode envisaged, the report (OECD 2009, p.100) stresses that “continuous feedback on usage and satisfaction can improve service quality, development and delivery so that services better match user expectations”. The United Nation’s (2010, p.97) annual review also concluded with the statement that “A global agreement on a consistent framework for measuring e-government is called for”, along with the need to measure “the degree of satisfaction of e-government service users”. This, however, failed to capture the need to measure e-government as a proportion of all service delivery channels.

Three of the four “considerations for future research on ‘customer satisfaction’” in the conclusion to Nunn et al (2009, p.103) were¹⁶:

- “the need to track patterns in customer satisfaction on an ongoing and comparative basis;
- the importance of disaggregating satisfaction with intended and unintended consequences of service provision, to isolate what elements of satisfaction are related to the means of service delivery rather than contextual or policy/legislative dynamics;
- the importance of assessing customer satisfaction with provider services on longitudinal and comparative basis.”

These repeat calls in the literature, coincide with the outcomes of this research, although the conceptual framework had been proposed earlier, and indicate the importance of a model over all channels (see Section 2.8. Key research questions).

However, a single week in March 2010 brought out two reports and a speech from the then Prime Minister demonstrating some major changes. Brown (2010) stated “Mygov marks the end of the one-size-fits-all, man from the ministry-knows-best approach to public services”. Later, the same speech revealed the establishment of “a new public services unit” and concluded that “the internet offers us a chance to reinvent deliberative democracy for the modern age”. The first and second quotations perhaps demonstrating a reincarnation of e-government and the Cabinet Office E-Government Unit, whilst the third that whilst we remain a representative democracy, opportunities may be presented to use technology in a deliberative manner. HM Treasury (2010, p.76) revealed, as one of the next steps from the ‘Total Place’¹⁷ trials that government will “ensure all frontline staff are able to feedback their queries, suggestions or

¹⁶ The fourth bullet point was: “the importance of tracking how Jobcentre Plus services contribute to wider issues of social fairness and cohesion.” This is not directly related to satisfaction but may be viewed indirectly from it.

¹⁷ Total Place is an initiative that examines how a ‘whole area’ approach to public services can lead to better services at less cost. It seeks to identify and avoid duplication between organisations

complaints about data requests by requiring Departments to review their internal feedback mechanisms by summer 2010". This would support the consideration of feedback loops to be expressed in Section 2.8. Key research questions. Meanwhile, the DCLG (2010, p.4) removed the need for councils to record and report National Indicator 14 or "avoidable contact", indirectly accepting the ongoing criticism of an unused and overly complex metric. What will remain of these proposals following the change in government in May 2010 remains to be seen. Although the cuts resulting may restrain some developments, they might also require innovation in service delivery to reduce costs whilst maintaining services. Immediately following the budget, the new government commenced online 'consultation' with public sector staff for them to recommend areas for savings, which was then opened to the wider public for their proposals.

2.8. Key research questions

The above literature survey confirms a lack of research of practical benefit to e-government practitioners, particularly those outside of massive central government bodies. It also validates the conclusions from CHAPTER 1 – RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT, that to extract the benefits from e-government, those involved need to consider examining services from the source of all those potentially involved, to the point of service delivery i.e. the processes. In fact, Moon & Welch (2005) quoted in Gil-Garcia et al (2005, p.21) state that:

"as with all other types of significant managerial activities by public organizations, [e-government] success will be determined by the ability of public servants to understand and address the desires and concerns of the governing citizens and to communicate informed decisions to the same individuals as governed citizens."

This echoes McLoughlin & Cornford (2006, p.9), but the "configuration of participation" needs to allow for and encourage the exchange of social capital

between those involved to avoid resistance. Proponents of “lean thinking” which developed from the Toyota Production System, Seddon & Brand (2008, p.8), in a response to the Local Government White Paper of October 2006 (DCLG 2006), criticise government policy and highlight three key problems – “high levels of failure demand”, “measures driving the wrong behaviour” and “demoralisation of the workers”. These, they believe are brought about by targets and standards and instead encourage a move to measures that “relate to the purpose of the service from the customer’s point of view”.

This was confirmed by the conclusion of Parker et al (2008, p. 9) that:

“focus on service improvement has not been enough to gain more trust for local government. Councils also need to use the personal interactions between their staff and the public to build ongoing, two-way relationships with the people they serve based on honesty and reciprocity.”

This was further supported by Merholz et al (2008, p.91) who stated that “to fully succeed, each customer-facing channel needs to stop being a walled-off silo and become an instrument in a coordinated symphony that addresses the whole customer experience”, and that “services continually evolve to meet customers’ needs”. This was also emphasized by Maritz Inc (2006, p.14) who stated that “A critical factor in many cases is the lack of one person or group who is solely in charge of managing the customer experience. The CEO and strategy team may make overall customer satisfaction improvement a major initiative, but unless there is a person held accountable for managing the entire process at all touch points, it will generate mediocre returns”. A complex technical solution was proposed by Chun & Atluri (2003, p. 1) with their “Ontology-based Workflow Change Management”, which was an automated solution to change management within an e-government environment.

The stimuli provided by the imposition of electronic service delivery encouraged some to think of smarter processes and this is where substantial cost savings could be made, but the type of change required by service improvement is not

easy and should be done prior to the introduction of electronic systems. This has resulted in something of a dichotomy in the rush to deliver services electronically whilst the encouragement of process change requires a more ordered pace, if it is to succeed. Bloomfield & Hayes (2005, p.10 &19) suggest that, even with business process reengineering, the modernisation agenda is unproductive, proposing that the business silos are a necessary part of government, and they describe the then UK government policy around e-government in terms such as “managerial and technicist rhetoric” and suggesting a scarcity of evidence behind the practice. Most recently in the UK, a central government funded study of the effect of their recent reforms on local government, (Bovaird et al. 2009, p.38), concluded that “Four of the Department’s¹⁸ policies were seen as having had a particularly significant impact on improvement: CPA, the e-government strategy, LPAs and the best value regime”. However, reservations were expressed about “devolving decisions to the neighborhood level as means of improving services in the authorities”. The research was seen to provide “empirical support for the contention that increased stakeholder engagement is associated with better services”. With the level of detachment of the study (Bovaird et al. 2009) from detailed policy, however, it can provide only such generalized conclusions.

A key challenge for the research is to find what metrics have been used to measure the improvements and whether and how they can be adopted in the later stages of implementation. Di Maio (2007) has made an excellent effort at pointing out Public-Value-of-IT frameworks across the world but what he presents are complex tools and appear too large for local government bodies. What is needed is a framework suitable for the smaller organization. This was confirmed by initial investigations by Carbo & Williams (2004, p.97), unfortunately that work, however, was never extended due to lack of funding¹⁹.

¹⁸ Department of Communities and Local Government,

¹⁹ As confirmed by Carbo (2007)

Perhaps what National Indicator 14 (NI14), 'failure demand' and 'avoidable contact', as discussed above in Section 2.3.4. NI14, are all attempting to provide is a measure for customer experience, as described in the private sector by Meyer & Schwager (2007, p.118):

“Although few companies have zeroed in on customer experience, many have been trying to measure customer satisfaction and have plenty of data as a result. The problem is that measuring customer satisfaction does not tell anyone how to achieve it. Customer satisfaction is essentially the culmination of a series of customer experiences or, one could say, the net result of the good minus the bad ones. It occurs when the gap between the customers' expectations and their subsequent experiences has been closed. To understand how to achieve satisfaction, a company must deconstruct it into its component experiences.”

This process that may prove too involved in many cases and may require focus on the “unsatisfactory” experiences and deconstructing them for current and also future improvement. From this and others, the literature suggests that the ideal scale of measurement would be, in customer terms, the spectrum of satisfaction across all channels. In terms of the gap analysis, Brown (2007, p.563) argues “it is the gap between expectations and actual experience that influences satisfaction” and this is supported by practical experience in the airline industry, which has indicated to Lapre and Tsikriktsis (2006, p.353) that:

“Even if an organization delivers identical results over time, customer dissatisfaction may increase as customers increase their expectations. As a result, it is imperative for organizations to manage the balance of customer ex ante expectations and ex post expectations.”

They also identify corporate root-cause analysis as the approach by one company to investigating dissatisfaction, when reported. Further indicating that whilst satisfaction may provide a parsimonious proxy metric to service delivery, there is a need for subsequent granular analysis to be carried out to actually improve the delivery of the service. This aligns well with Pumphrey (2006b) in strategic terms but also the experiences in the banking sector, when employing

multiple channels, (Patricio et al 2003 and Joseph et al 1999) as discovered in the literature.

In concluding that “practitioners and public administration scholars alike need a good measure of overall citizen satisfaction with local government services, yet almost no research has been done to develop or test such a measure”, Van Ryzin (2004, p.26) offers the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), the EVL (exit, voice and loyalty) and the EVLN (exit, voice, loyalty and neglect) scales. Unfortunately for the aim of this research they are comparatively complex with the ACSI containing three items measured over a scale seven long, EVL four items measured on a scale five long and EVLN with five items over a five-long scale. This level of complexity makes it hard for the scales to be employed by smaller local authorities or public bodies, thus providing the research gap, which this research is attempting to fill. However, as Swindell & Kelly (2000, p.46) concluded:

“The fact that it is very difficult to measure program effectiveness or service quality in a totally objective fashion should never discourage attempts to develop and refine better indicators. The fact that citizens may not understand the difference between the role of their local government as service provider and service producer does not make their evaluation of service quality any less meaningful.”

Similarly, but more recently, and in a paper only considering electronic service delivery, Verdegem & Verleye (2009) propose a model that they ultimately break down from 29 indicators to nine, all of which measure end user satisfaction of different aspects of the web site in question.

Giese & Cote (2000, p.iii) had stated that “the satisfaction literature has not yet, explicitly or implicitly, established a generally accepted definition of satisfaction”. They concluded by stating that the components of satisfaction needed to be modified as appropriate to the industry and context, including whether this be purely in levels of dissatisfaction or not. This is restated by Zairi (2000, p.331),

saying “customer satisfaction is not an absolute scenario, but very much depends upon interactions; feedback, praise and, yes, complaints. Complaints have to be looked at in a constructive, positive and professional perspective”.

There is also a danger highlighted in Delivery and Transformation Group (2006, p.15) of recreating silos in channel form, rather than in services, recreating the original issue and hence a need to balance all channels. If there are any parallels with retail customers, research by Tesco (Young, 2007), has indicated that shoppers want the range of channels operated by the company to be linked together as much as possible, which may be an indicator for others to keep face-to-face, telephone and web in line. This is reinforced by Straub et al (2002, p.119) who argue that “firms that want their traditional and new network-based channels to work together require metrics for interoperability”. It is also supported by Vesanen and Raulas (2006, p.17) who propose that “marketing today is about managing the elements described by the process model, and the entire process itself”. This was also confirmed by Verdegem & Hauttekeete (2008, p.272) who conclude their research by stating that:

“Our study proves that personal contact is missing when we confront the respondents with internet, iDTV and mobile applications. The need of a contact point which still allows a more personalised approach remains crucial. Government must be aware of the user preferences and must examine how the benefits of both offline and online channels could be combined. As mentioned before, the successful realisation of one-stop government in the future must be based on the multichannel principle, in which different channels for service delivery are seamlessly connected.”

Finding that existing service typologies don’t suit the public sector, Ebbers et al (2008, p.184) develop “channel types” for which channel is used, and “channel mode” for the “how” or “with what objective”. This develops (Ebbers et al 2008, p.198) into a mechanism for designing the correct channel or combination of them for the mode. This is also a mechanism to avoid ambiguity and to anchor expectations, so that citizens don’t use an inappropriate channel for a particular service. This approach was also confirmed by Bolton (2003, p.44), who considering the private sector, stated that “when e-services are viewed as part

of a product portfolio, they can be considered to act as both substitutes and complements to existing services". In support, the North East Improvement Partnership Customer First Network (2008, p.6) have argued that:

"Corporate systems should be in place to help measure customer satisfaction – the key quality criteria for any customer focused organisation. These should be multi-channel and configured in accordance with the available common languages (controlled lists) that describe local government services.

The UK Labour government desire to personalise services, which much of the proposed transformation supported, revealed the need for the integration of the entire process, along with research into it, as concluded by Adomavicius & Tuzhilin (2005, p.90). This is confirmed by Snellen (2007, p.417), who states:

"In the field of service delivery, the strategic options to be considered are: a shift from a supply oriented to a demand-oriented public service delivery: from a ready-to-wear to a tailor-made service: and from a fragmented to an integrated service offer. An "outside-in" approach would also imply a shift from a functional bureaucratic to a holistic design of service delivery, from a one-service counter to a "multichanneling" entry to the service, and from a passive to a proactive orientation. Recognition of modern citizenship would result in a shift from 'passive' citizen participation to 'active' citizen participation in service delivery."

However, a potential inconsistency is the "demand-orientation" as against the "proactive" one, where "wants" might come before "needs", and this outcome of the customer view rather than the citizen view needs to be continually challenged.

A possible technical solution to this was captured by Loeffler (2009, p.13): "we need a new generation of CRM systems where a 'customer insight' means that the customer is given more insight into his/her solution, needs and possible solutions". This was then followed by a description of a major issue, which is not resolved by the technical solution:

“Clearly, the challenge here is to establish a new relationship between service users and professionals – this is more about changing culture than changing technology.”

This thesis argues that existing technical solutions are capable of performing this work, what is needed is to develop the processes that assist the user behind the scenes and employ them. There may also be data use or protection issues in the solution proposed by King and Loeffler, which might inhibit some of this thinking, but the key solution is to devise and implement improved and consistent processes around the various channels, for as King (2007, p.60) himself accepts “services behind the access channels appear to remain entrenched in their departmental silos”.

Considering what they label as the “Front Stage” and “Back Stage” in system design, Glushko & Tabas (2007, p.9) propose that:

“it is essential to create multidisciplinary design teams that explicitly include designers with front and back stage biases but who are motivated to teach and learn from each other. That’s because many of the most important design issues in service systems involve tradeoffs or potential conflicts between front stage and back stage goals.”

These same teams would be required to manage developments as a result of cross-channel citizen feedback for the same reason. This is supported by Sousa & Voss (2006, p.368) who state that “applying the concept of customer-centric service design – designing multichannel services addressing coherently the key customer requirements, rather than being internally driven by the ad hoc profusion of individual channels – may be especially useful”. This has been confirmed by experience in Canada, with Marson & Heintzman (2009, p.34) concluding that “action research focused on obtaining feedback from citizens that can be quickly translated by public managers into service improvements that citizens want and notice, including single windows, electronic gateways and service clusters”. This would indicate that responsive consultation with service

users regarding developments to modern mechanisms of delivery can be a worthwhile exercise.

A further issue that may evolve, and should be accounted for at the design stage, is the assumption that electronic service delivery reduces costs for the deliverer, as discussed in Section 2.3.8. Cost of service delivery. This will need to be studied in greater detail since experience may teach differently. It can be seen that some mechanisms only serve to locate costs elsewhere i.e. transfer costs to service user or partner and in G2G or G2C terms this may result in resistance and reduced satisfaction, as well as increased costs overall, which is a further reason to consider processes in their entirety. Bertot & Jaeger (2008, p.153) concluded their analysis by stating that “A service that is difficult to use is a service that is not used – and that is a costly mistake that will require greater investments to correct” This emphasis on efficiencies or cost savings may be a particular cause of digital exclusion and result in further issues.

This examination of the wider literature indicates that:

- improvement for the citizen will primarily be delivered by organizational change with the end-to-end processes involved. Importantly, it needs to be emphasised that the technological solution is less crucial,
- there was some evidence that customer satisfaction is a potential base measure for identifying movements in public value/social capital, which may help to identify necessary service delivery changes but further examination, particularly across the private sector, demonstrated that collecting the antithesis i.e. dissatisfaction, or at least general feedback, across all channels as qualitative data, in parallel with usage, as quantitative data, may better direct service improvements
- there is a strong historical basis behind the service structures which have been additionally confused by attempts to make them more efficient, this indicates that change should be carried out carefully. This may indicate

that employing technological solutions to create intergovernmental transparency, along with process improvements, may alleviate any confusion to the service user

According to National Statistics (2007, p.7) in 2007, 46% of adults who had accessed the Internet have used it to obtain information from public authorities' web sites, 31% of adults have downloaded official forms and 25% have returned completed forms. Whilst this indicates the growing use of the Internet, the remainder of the population without access or unwilling to use it, will be using different channels, that may also be subject to transformation. In a seminal e-commerce text, Gulati & Garino (2000) argue the need to balance the channel strategy with the existing face-to-face or telephone approach and either integrate, separate or balance the approaches for the benefit of the business as a whole. Government probably does not have the ability to separate, since it must be seen to provide an equivalent service to all its users and to do this without integration would involve replication, so it must seek to integrate its electronic services within its traditional delivery mechanisms for the benefit of all users. This balancing act is reinforced by van Deursen & Pietersen (2006, p. 14), who stated that "A related issue that we derive from media richness theory is that some of the services offered online, are too ambiguous to be dealt with electronically, given the relatively low richness of the Internet", similarly van Deursen et al (2006, p.279) describe how the Dutch government's "quantitative approach goes at the expense of a more qualitative approach that tries to identify the specific services different segments of the Dutch population are interested in and tries to focus supply on this demand". Hence, there is a need to employ channels appropriate to both the aspects of the service offered and required. This was reinforced by Verdegem & Hauttekeete (2008, p.267) who discovered that "people prefer the internet as a channel for retrieving general information" and of "the remaining services...the respondents show a clear preference for the counter as channel". This was confirmed in the UK (Dutton et al 2009, p.26) where Margetts is quoted stating that "Information seeking remains the most common e-government activity".

The literature review was necessarily broad to explore all existing and possible avenues suitable to measure the performance of e-government. It became clear from the literature in Section 2.2.2. Business process improvement, that reviewing which services would be most efficiently dealt with and how they were currently delivered should have been a precursor to any work, and hence demonstrating a need to establish benchmarks for the different channels of delivery at the outset. It was also discussed in Section 2.2.3. Measuring changes, that simple qualitative proxy measurement might better demonstrate improvement in service delivery from the citizens view, whilst Section 2.3. Metrics and user satisfaction posited satisfaction and dissatisfaction as that possible proxy measure, which was considered in greater detail within other business sectors in Section 2.3.1. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

However, it was always possible that existing approaches might be appropriate, so further investigation considered the Balanced Scorecard (Section 2.3.2) and some of its variants. Similarly there had been a number of benchmarking studies revealed internationally, including the UK government's own brainchild performance indicator "avoidable contact" to audit changes in customer service, which was reviewed and examined with practitioners, as it developed, as is revealed in Section 2.3.4. NI14. Once benchmarks had been considered (Section 2.3.3. Benchmarking) it was then that analysing potential gaps received consideration (Section 2.3.6.) since they could arise in a number of realms such as expectation, policy or perception, which had seen the development of some complex measurement systems. There had also been a lengthy consideration of where and how measures had been developed and their limitations. It was also revealed that the drive for electronic government, following that of e-commerce in the private sector, had made assumptions regarding user behaviour, which may not have been appropriate given the differing roles of citizen and consumer, this also presupposed that the cost of delivery of government services would parallel those in a commercial market

and lead to savings and hence these had to be taken into account in any rationale for measurement.

Examining the literature itself partially answered the research questions raised initially such as:

- the lack of appropriate implementation (limited business process review and public consultation having taken place)
- the limited use of benchmarks or systems of measurement (creating the need to propose some suitable ones)
- the need to apply an appropriate system of measurement to better steer e-government in a direction where citizens will use it

The initial research questions had anticipated coincidental explorations surrounding the adoption of e-government, whilst the role played by politics and Politics had clarified why limited use was made of e-government and measures, but also provided reasons to develop a parsimonious measure and a model capable of use across the range of potential service delivery channels. The review of the literature had initially offered the possibility of employing social capital and public value as measures, however these were later found inadequate. It did, however, reveal a lack of suitable measurement in general use, instead directing the researcher to encourage greater use of dis(satisfaction), whilst demonstrating the benefit of employing feedback loops to respond to policy and process changes filling in the revealed gaps and these would be used to develop a model solution.

On this basis, a theory is proposed here that the establishment of a metric across all channels will facilitate the delivery of services over them all, including electronic or future ones. From the literature, a possible metric appeared to be customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. In order to test the theory, an exploration was made of appropriate methodologies of data-gathering, as outlined in Chapter 3.

This research focused on three primary concerns:

- whether successful or appropriate implementation of e-government has occurred or is taking place
- whether metrics have been used to guide the achievement and how
- what and how metrics can be established along the implementation route map and whether they are appropriate

The literature review revealed a knowledge gap, along with a number of research gaps, such as knowledge transfer from private and academic sectors, in related fields, around the employment of metrics in public service delivery. Some information towards improving services might be captured by employing the analysis of the multiple gaps suggested by Parasuman et al (1985), Wood et al (2007) and Speller & McCarron (2008). However, in line with the parsimonious view proposed in Section 2.3.3. Benchmarking, to facilitate use at smaller organizations, the research was now to consider the model and theory that the collection of qualitative data at a service level by service channel, along with quantitative usage data being recorded over time, will identify issues with service delivery, whilst recognising and supporting channel movements as they are occurring.

The literature, particularly the discussion in Section 2.3. Metrics and user satisfaction, indicated that the choice of the term 'metric' in the research questions might be confusing since the literature indicated a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data being required, particularly if the measure was to be around (dis)satisfaction and hence, for clarity, the questions should refer to 'systems of measurement'. Following the lengthy investigation into existing and potential methods of measuring service delivery in the literature it was confirmed that this provided a suitably useful and parsimonious measure.

The initial three research questions should now be refined to two examining:

- What *systems of measurement*, including government required ones, are being employed?
- If, and how well, *systems of measurement* are guiding multi-channel service delivery?

During the research a model had been developed to assist in the application of such systems of measurement. The model initially only consisted of four elements that needed to be monitored:

- Customer satisfaction (and volume of customers)
- Channel (e.g. web/telephone/face-to-face)
- Time (e.g. per month, week, day)

An authority recording these and analysing them might be assisted in guiding its channel movement. For example, on being presented with low customer satisfaction and volumes over the web channel this situation might be altered by improving the web channel, and monitoring the customer response over a period of time (since this would not be immediately fed back). This was captured by DeLone and McLean (2003, p.16) in a ten-year review of their Information Systems Success Model, when they stated that:

“simply measuring the amount of time a system is used does not properly capture the relationship between usage and the realization of expected results. On the other hand, it can be argued that *declining* usage may be an important indication that the anticipated benefits are not being realized.”

Following a workshop on the Government’s eService Delivery Standards in the East Midlands of England, a private company ‘rol’ has worked with a number of local authorities to establish an automated system around the standards, which is outlined in a project update (Local Government East Midlands 2007). The application, known as GovMetric, extracts customer satisfaction data from systems and graphically presents it. The application was also reported on favourably in Beaty (2007, p.13), and published in a weekly magazine

distributed to all local government councillors. Further, the value of qualitative data in the area of web metrics was emphasised by Barnes & Vidgen (2006, p.776) who found that “The use of comment analysis with traditional survey data provided a useful triangulation, adding strength to the results of the assessment”. OECD (2009, p.28) states, in support, that “the question of using channel management proactively as an instrument for creating incentives for behavioural changes among users is actively considered by some countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands”.

The model or conceptual framework proposed in Figure 2.2 reflects the ‘lean thinking’ opinion that only the citizen can define value or quality. Hence citizens are represented at the top of the illustration, since it is their satisfaction that is intended to be measured on a relatively straightforward basis, compared with existing models for customer satisfaction which involve overly complex calculations on multiple variables. According to Dawes (2008, p.7), who having tested 5-point, 7-point and 10-point Likert scales, the number of scale points makes no difference. Further, according to Fournier & Mick (1999, p. 17) “two consumers each circling the number five on a ten-point satisfaction scale may have much less equivalent satisfactions than formerly presumed”. Fournier & Mick also propose (1999, p. 17) that “the supplementation of rating scale information with substantial qualitative data, lest their insights be impoverished by the belief that consumer satisfaction is solely a matter of quantity, absent of quality”. In terms of attempting to create a parsimonious model, a note in Brown (2007, p.569) provides encouragement to maintain simplicity:

“Simon’s (1957) pioneering research on “satisficing’ implies that there are diminishing returns to choice (i.e., individuals can’t handle too many choices) but that some range of choice leads to desirable outcomes. Recent research in psychology supports the implications of Simon’s satisficing claim – choosing among a finite range of options is generally preferable to no choice at all.”

Simplicity of approach is further supported by Reichheld (2003, p.53) who states that:

“The most basic surveys – employing the right questions – can allow companies to report timely data that are easy to act on. Too many of today’s satisfaction survey processes yield complex information that’s months out of date by the time it reaches frontline managers.”

This is also confirmed by Meyer & Schwager (2007, p.124) who state that:

“A well-designed survey is not simply one that elicits the desired information. It must itself avoid becoming an unfortunate aspect of the customer experience. Hence, it shouldn’t be onerous for the taker or deny him the chance to communicate the special nature of his experience.”

These observations have assisted in the construction of the model in Figure 2.2. and further support the decision to develop the research questions with the replacement of the term ‘metric’ by ‘system of measurement’. The model is a view of the end-to-end process involved in citizen engagement with the citizen able to approach any service by any channel or mix of them. The User Layer and Performance Layer will not be entirely apparent to the citizen but the User Layer will permit the supply of and response to feedback regarding service. The Performance Layer stores and processes both satisfaction and longitudinal usage data about all channels. It is important to remember that a range of channels, or modern mechanisms of service delivery, including face-to-face, telephony, web or a combination of them, are likely to be facilitating services. The numbering of channels from 1 through n in the model allows for the existing ten or more service channels and any future ones as they are developed.

When the citizen views information or makes some service action, through whichever channel, they are able to supply satisfaction feedback, which along with usage information (channel and time) is captured at the User Layer and recorded in the Performance Layer. The User Layer also permits feedback from the service to the user, informing them of any changes carried out as a result of

feedback, service issues and downtime, thus hopefully managing the promise gap.

The Service Layer encompasses the back office including ICT applications, service processes, regulatory and legislative requirements, and policy. Thus, feedback may be supplied at the User Layer complaining about the presentation via the web, which will require action at the Channel Layer for the web channel to amend, whereas if the issue is about information being requested, this will require review in the Service Layer, which itself may be to do with the system process, policy or the ICT application in use and could need attention from any one of a range of people from ICT staff, service management or politicians.

In action research terms the employment of the model might be identified as a 'modest intervention', as described by Jonsson (1999, p.9), in the general stream of e-government usage as commenced in 1998. It was seen as desirable by the researcher that such an intervention might bring to an end the ad-hoc e-enablement of services and instead direct and manage changes to mechanism of service delivery and the back-office processes. A similar proposition was made, before electronic service delivery became mainstream, by Adamson (1994, p.12) stating that:

"A better approach is to have the unit which has collected, analysed and integrated the data, develop a presentation of the data, the problem, the customers affected, the monthly cost of not resolving the problem and a suggested solution."

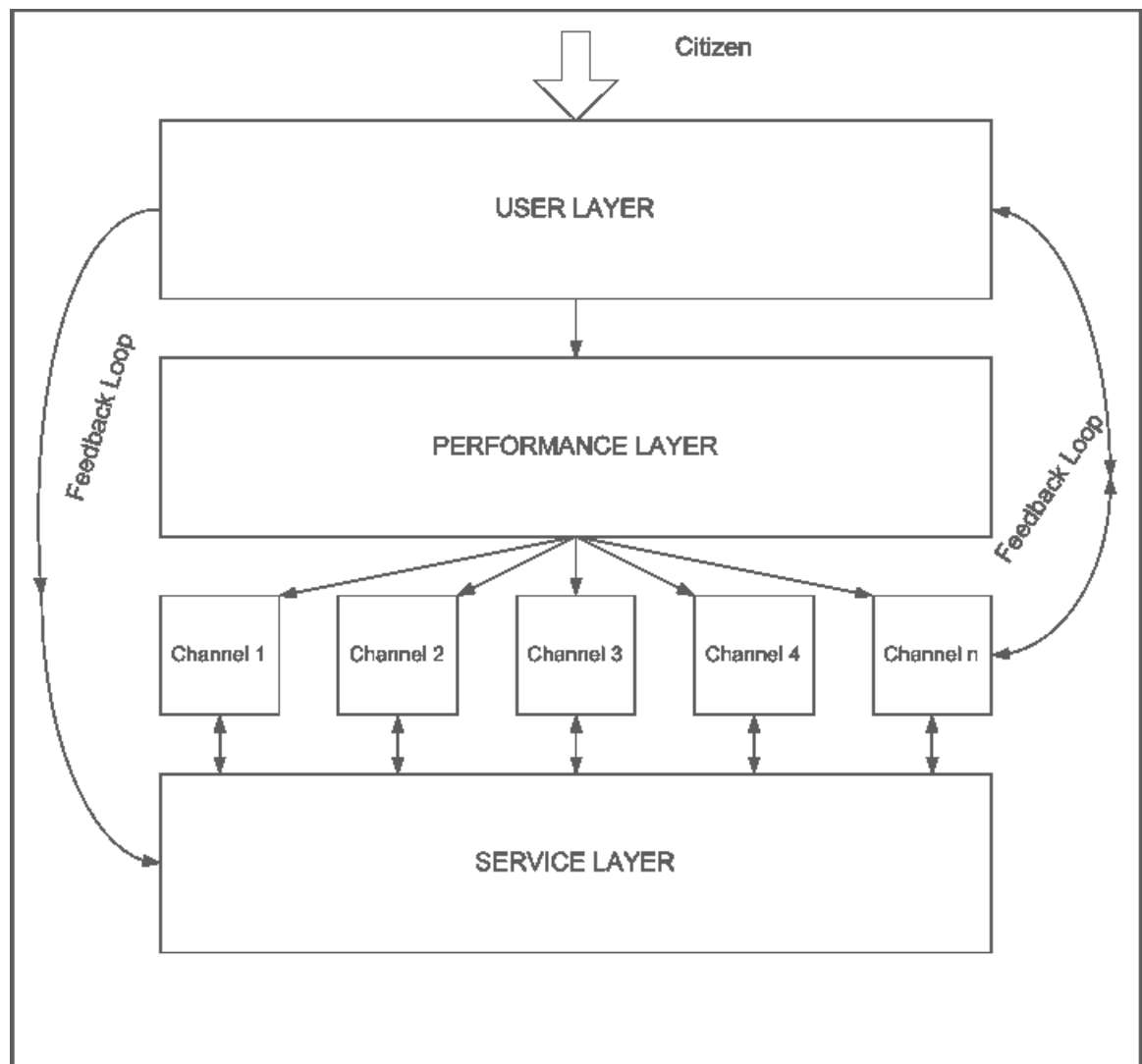
Except that in the days of electronic service delivery the presentation of much of this data will occur automatically and electronically. The need for a feedback loop was identified by Chapman (2004, p. 80), in championing "systems thinking" in government, who stated "many of the obstacles to learning that have been identified would be corrected if there were an effective feedback loop linking policy design to outcomes". In fact, the loops need to reflect all the

relevant gaps identified by Parasuraman et al (1985), Wood et al (2007) and Speller & McCarron (2008) as displayed in Table 2.2 in Section 2.3.6. Gap analysis, which include the policy (or internal communications) gap, the promise (or external communication) gap and the design (or performance measurement) gap.

There are possible limitations to the use of such a parsimonious model in practice, in that:

- Citizens may not be fully aware of some of the legislative or other complexities behind how a service is presented when giving feedback. However, this means making greater use of the feedback loops to present to the user any rationale for not responding to suggestions.
- Relatively small amounts of feedback may need to be accounted for in relation to a larger user base, which may require a policy decision. This may be regarding a context such as accessibility or similar condition. Otherwise relatively ad-hoc changes may be driven by a statistical minority. When a relatively small proportion of the population are unable to use a service by a particular delivery mechanism, if they have no other suitable route, a compensatory one will be required but this will have been determined by policy rather than feedback.
- There may be an unwillingness within government, even if Unconscious, to change practices, processes and organizational structures within it, at the behest of those outside of it.
- In the current 'age of austerity', the provision of what may be seen as a 'back office' system to improve front-line service delivery may appear contradictory or even an extravagance. However, the investment in improving potentially flawed service delivery to direct it through the most suitable lowest-cost channel as appropriate should demonstrate longer term savings.

Figure 2.2 – Model / conceptual framework



The model proposed is effectively just that, a model. Due to the diversity of organizational structures, CRM systems, content management systems (CMS), telephony systems and applications in use the researcher does not believe a standard middleware broker or application is viable at the current time, but one may be in the future. In fact an “Ontology-based Workflow Change Management for Flexible eGovernment Service Delivery” has already been proposed by Chun & Athuri (2003) but this is an acknowledgement of the delivery issues rather than a real-life solution.

Another stage of the research is to promote the model, the supporting theory and refine it in response to real world challenges. Certain current applications can facilitate recording of feedback and transaction volumes, which whilst varying in complexity and cost, can be tuned to circumstances. However, the main requirement to implement the model is a corporate will for cultural change - the need to accept the variants on co-production as useful tools, the understanding that all channels should operate sympathetically with each other, and the necessity for staff supporting the different channels to cooperate. Thus, there is a need to examine the application of such a model and theory, and this develops a new third research question:

- Whether the model and theory proposed, or parts of it, are being employed, along with citizen satisfaction within a system of measurement?

The next phase of the research, described in **CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**, seeks answers to the questions listed below, developed from the aims, outlined in Section 1.1. Introduction, following examination of the literature in this chapter:

- What systems of measurement, including government required ones, are being employed?
- If, and how well, systems of measurement are guiding multi-channel service delivery?
- Whether the model and theory proposed, or parts of it, are being employed, along with citizen satisfaction within a system of measurement?

The (parsimonious) model, as described before, consists of four elements that are monitored:

- Customer satisfaction (and volume of customers)
- Channel (e.g. web/telephone/face-to-face)
- Time (e.g. per month, week, day)

The thesis being that recording these and analysing them would assist in improving service and managing channel movements. Intervention in the fullest sense would require mass employment of the model. However, even central government is normally unable to enforce standardisation across local government without legislation. Therefore, initially, the approach was to be one of 'modest intervention' by promoting the model as potential best practice through the weblog and trial employment of it at the researcher's own authority. The feedback to the proposal from two questionnaires, interviews with a range of practitioners, and from the weblog, alongside presentations of the ongoing research to practitioners would, through such longitudinal inquiry, provide answers to the research questions. Thus, the range of tools had been conceived and employed as a whole, and should be seen as such.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction: philosophy, theory and model

Heeks & Bailur (2007, p.252) state from their analysis of e-government research that “the research we analysed contained no clear statement of research philosophy”. This researcher has attempted to consider and employ one at the outset.

Paraphrasing Silverman (2005, p.96), a theory is a set of concepts used to define and explain, or define or explain some phenomenon and from the same source, a model is the overall framework of how the researcher looks at reality, hence it consists of how the researcher considers reality, the ontology, and how they perceive knowledge to be made, their epistemology. Olson (1995, p.1) considers that “the question underlying differences of research stances (or paradigms) should be their ontological and epistemological assumptions”.

Examining the main research traditions, as presented in Table 3.1, it is possible to provide the philosophical underpinnings of the proposed research. The researcher holds the view that society and nature have an independent existence outside of anything the human mind may seek to impose, hence in ontological terms, the research will be objective. This is contrary to the Hermeneutic/postmodern view as described by Flinders & Mills (1993, pp.188-189), which adopt a subjectivist view. At the same time, the researcher considers that it is impossible to consider the world objectively, and that claims for knowledge bear the influence of others thinking, which may yet again be externally influenced, with government being a social construct, and so epistemologically subjective. This view is supported by Potter (1996, p.36) who states that “With the question of ontology, the central distinction seems to be on the matter of materialism versus idealism. Materialism is the belief that there is a fixed material reality that is external to people”.

Table 3.1 – Main research traditions, Coghlan & Brannick (2005, p.5)

Philosophical Foundations	Positivism	Hermeneutic and postmodernism	Critical research and action research
Ontology	Objectivist	Subjectivist	Objectivist
Epistemology	Objectivist	Subjectivist	Subjectivist
Theory	Generalizable	Particular	Particular
Reflexivity	Methodological	Hyper	Epistemic
Role of researcher	Distanced from data	Close to data	Close to data

It is confirmed by Olson (1995, p.2) and Chen & Hirschheim (2004, p.201), that the researcher, being epistemologically subjective, is operating towards an interpretative rather than positivist paradigm, but taking an ontologically objective viewpoint, which means that by laying down a theory and repeatedly testing it within the social environment, in qualitative terms, the researcher, rather than adopting an extreme position should view it as a contextual position, as described in Morgan & Smircich (1980, p.496), who state that:

“The beginning of systemic wisdom lies in an awareness that relationships change in concert and cannot be reduced to a set of determinate laws and propositions, as positivist epistemology would have it.”

Examining individually, the traditions, as presented in Table 3.1, as described by Oates (2006, p.301) many action research studies are within the interpretative paradigm, and in this particular instance both critical and interpretative approaches have a role to play. Whilst Galliers (1992, p.157) locates action research within the interpretivist approach and in a subset of case study, he states the role of the action researcher as needing to “actively associate themselves with the practical outcomes of the research in addition to seeking to identify theoretical outcomes”.

This is further developed by Probert (2004, p.4) who states that:

“Our understanding of the real world in which IS research and IS development must take place may often be partial, confused and even bigoted. Essentially, critically-minded vigilance will provide some defence against the latter – as will an openness to the critical comments and suggestions of others.”

Which was also confirmed by Carlile & Christensen (2005, p.17) when considering theory building in management research, by them stating:

“The healthiest and most accurate mindset for researchers is that nearly *all* data – whether presented in the form of large data sample analysis on one extreme, or as ethnographic description of behaviour on the other – are subjective. Numerical and verbal data alike are abstractions from a much more complex reality, out of which the researcher attempts to pull the most salient variables or patterns for examination.”

In Table 3.1, reflexivity, as described in Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p.6), is the concept employed by the researcher to examine their relationship with the matter under investigation and in terms of epistemic reflexivity, *ibid* (p.6), is researcher’s process of reviewing and challenging their own broader assumptions. In view of Becker & Niehaves (2007) work on multidisciplinary research and epistemological perspectives, the research intends to maintain consideration of their own beliefs and others, throughout the research, to ensure a systematic approach.

Given that and the fact that the researcher is seeking to develop a model or models for use purely in the area of government service delivery, and that the researcher will be examining his own beliefs and learning throughout the research process, the philosophical foundation supports the use of action research. Hult and Lennung (1980, p.241) define action research as:

“Action research simultaneously assists in practical problem-solving and expands scientific knowledge, as well as enhances the competencies of the respective actors, being performed collaboratively in an immediate situation using data feedback in a cyclical process aiming at an increased understanding of a given social situation, primarily applicable for the understanding of change processes in social systems and undertaken within a mutually acceptable ethical framework.”

Considering critical research, a number of papers were examined including McGrath (2005), Avgerou (2005) and Walsham (2005). However, although the researcher maintains a critical focus, especially with the potential for political interest in the research aims, the research questions have limited ability to be examined successfully and purely according to critical social theory. This is because, in the description provided by Usoro (2006, p. 81) who is quoting Walsham (2005 p.112), critical social theory seeks to examine what is wrong with the world rather than what is right, which would be contrary to the overall aim of the research in helping government improve customer service. This is despite the view of Niehaves & Stahl (2006, p.6), who in attempting to define criticality as an alternative perspective alongside interpretivism and positivism, as well as with non-criticality, list three characteristics of critical research in that it:

- seeks to change reality
- the intention to change reality is usually expressed in terms of emancipation
- it questions the assumption of reality

Whilst Klein & Myers (1999, p.69) propose more strongly that “IS research can be classified as critical if the main task is seen as being one of social critique, whereby the restrictive and alienating conditions of the status quo are brought to life”. By contrast Lau (1999, p.170) states that “action research can provide the type of pragmatism needed in IS research through its focus on change and improvement in practice”, which is a target of this e-government research.

Stowell et al (1997, p.159 on) whilst advocating action research as a “useful way of conducting work in the field of information systems”, posit two modes of carrying out the research, along with highlighting issues for the respective modes. The first, field study mode, is the carrying out of field studies to learn

about ideas formulated from the literature review, whilst the second, consultancy mode, follows from an initial consultancy offering a research opportunity if it can be done seamlessly. Although this research has elements of the second, the primary work is clarifying a potential theory from the literature amongst practitioners i.e. in the field. The lessons highlighted in that context are:

- Obtain willing collaborators within the correct domain
- Focus on the approach used to undertake the study rather than predicting the outcomes
- Engage collaborators throughout the study
- Address at the outset how to incorporate other forms of research without compromising the principles of action research
- Have a strategy to deal with outcomes to avoid false expectations
- Maintain rigour and awareness to identify when the study has naturally completed

Which are confirmed in their conclusions by Baskerville & Wood-Harper (1996, p.244) and also supported by Byrne (2005, p.138) who lists four important implications for action research projects:

- explicit reference to the epistemological stance
- develop networks of action, rather than focusing on single units
- adopting a participatory approach and a long term perspective
- develop generalisations from the project

The research approach will involve all the lessons and implications, listed above. The approach being the mechanism described by Ellis (2004, p.133) quoting Argyris & Schon (1991) that:

“action research can be understood as intervention experiments within particular practice contexts in which action researchers test hypotheses pertaining to the resolution of particular problems and attempt to effect a desirable change in the setting based on their hypotheses.”

A number of theories and models are available within the realm of information systems and some have been proposed for use within e-government studies. However, this researcher considers that the direct interface with the technology (e.g. web sites) is not the sole description of e-government but rather that an appropriate description must include all channels and also envelope the ‘back office’ to ensure process transformation.

One such model is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), as employed by Al-adawi et al (2005, p.5). This is only partially applicable when dealing with a mediated model, since the gradation to or from technology is dependent on the channel and the apparent involvement of technology. According to Schneberger & Wade (n.d.), TAM proposes that usefulness and ease of use determine intention to use a system. TAM is also a development of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to the field of technology. A further development of TAM is the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), described by Schneberger and Wade (n.d.) which holds performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions as determining usage. This, again, is not appropriate given the operating definition of e-government nor the fact that use of government channels is rarely based on choice but upon necessity.

However, Davies (2004) considers the appropriateness of ‘disruption theory’, developed by Christensen (1997), to e-government. The theory is that “not all technology-enabled innovations have the potential to fundamentally transform”, transformation requires a vision beyond existing processes and values and so is beyond the technology. This may be a reason for the revolution not occurring in the manner expected and actually requiring a fundamental change in

processes. Christensen (1997, p.101) also raises the controversial theory of “resource dependence”, where “freedom of action is limited to satisfying the needs of those entities outside the firm”, or satisfying the suppliers and customers, which seems logical in this context and then goes on (Christensen, 1997, p.103) to the importance of “resource allocation”, where projects are thoroughly analysed at all levels of the organization prior to senior management approval. Most importantly from Christensen (1997, p.162) in the context of e-government, is the “Organizational Capabilities Framework”, where a body needs its resources, processes and values to be aligned in order to innovate.

Other supporters of the TAM construct, Carter & Belanger (2005), have developed it further, combining it with aspects of Diffusion of Innovation and web trust to create a model of e-government adoption which they consider to be parsimonious. However, they consider the similarity between e-commerce and e-government to support the combined use of the three models, (Carter & Belanger 2005, p.7). It is this researcher’s view that Occam’s Razor can achieve a still leaner approach, given what he considers to be an inappropriate use of the TAM, for the reason described above.

An additional theory to consider is that of the Media Richness Theory described by Ebberts et al (2008, p.184) in terms of e-government. This theory “proposes that media have a certain degree of “richness”, based on their capacities of immediate feedback, the number of cues used, the level of personalization, and the language variety”. Hence depending on the “richness”, and the complexity of the transaction, the channel can be attuned to the potential user. Further detail is provided by van Deursen & Pieterse (2006, p.5) who describe the Media Richness Theory in the context of some others and the channels:

“Based on the Media Richness Theory, the Social Influence Model and Channel Expansion Theory, we can first say that the various channels differ in richness, with personal services being most rich followed by telephone, electronic and written channels. Second, the difference in richness makes channels appropriate for different tasks, with personal channels being suitable for equivocal (complex) tasks, written channels

for relatively simple tasks and telephone and electronic channels being somewhere in between. Third, the use of channels may depend on the task (or service involved), as Media Richness Theory predicts, but also on social influences and the perceptions towards the channels.”

Moving away from IS theories to more mature business theories presents both the Contingency Theory (CT) and Stakeholder Theory (ST). CT as described by Schneberger & Wade envelopes four ideas:

- that there is no universal way to manage,
- that the design of the organization must fit its environment,
- that the sub-systems must also fit,
- that an organization's needs are better satisfied when its design and management style are appropriate

ST takes the approach that attending to the needs of multiple shareholders ensures stability and according to Flak & Rose (2005, p.33):

“The challenge will be to develop evaluation tools and performance metrics that accommodate both the need for efficiency and traditional public sector values. The adoption of a stakeholder governance mindset can help ensure that the needs and requirements of various groups are incorporated into such metrics and tools.”

Reflecting on the research questions:

- What metrics, including government required ones, are being employed?
- If, and how well, metrics are guiding multi-channel service delivery?
- Whether the model and theory, above, or parts of it are being employed?

Both CT & ST so described, from different angles, envelop the research questions, in that the researcher is seeking to satisfy the users or customers of

public services (stakeholders), whilst aware that one size does not fit all (is contingent).

A number of authors confirm the qualitative nature of e-government research including Holliday & Kwok (2004, p.553) investigating e-government in Hong Kong who consider that “while some of the necessary analysis can be captured in quantitative terms, inevitably, much of it has a largely qualitative component”. This is further confirmed by Riedl, Roithmayr & Schenkenfelder (2007, p.3) who state that “as a consequence of the shift of the focus of IS research from technological to managerial and organizational issues, qualitative research methods have become increasingly useful”.

An additional research perspective might be structuration theory, which Heinze & Hu (2005, p.891) employ in their review of e-government research, and as they state:

“In most cases, articles on e-government adopt viewpoints that reflect ideas taken from either the technological imperative or strategic choice views. This tendency may pigeonhole research regarding the possible effects and breadth of e-government, because these viewpoints treat technology and its use as objective and measurable.

Hence the value of employing action research, which will maintain a breadth of perspective, as expected in structuration theory. There are some similarities with the structured case framework as described by Carroll & Swatman (2000, p.237) and the evolutionary case outlined by Dawson (2008, p.30). However, both lack the active dissemination in the practitioner community that action research includes. Although Grimsley & Meehan (2007, p.137) employ a structured case approach to evaluate two particular e-government projects, this particular research is intended to assist government in general and local authorities in particular, whilst potentially being applicable to all public services.

The research examined a range of local authorities in detail, seeking different approaches to the challenge of achieving successful transformation as identified in the literature and also for best practice. The idea is not to label success or failure but to see where actual improvements in service delivery appear to have been achieved that might stand some chance of being offset against investment. In particular, the research tested the hypothesis developed from the literature that there is a need to develop or establish a straightforward method of measuring process outcomes across any channel in local government services, and that satisfaction may provide a suitable indicator, which may allow process changes to be discretely monitored as they affect the user.

The aim had been to interview a range of senior officers involved and derive the reasoning behind particular approaches taken and discover any lessons they feel that they have learned as a result.

Having decided to cover a topic that was potentially nebulous, which would limit the use of quantitative analysis, the researcher looked more deeply at the literature regarding potential methodologies and means of surveying a constantly changing field of work over a relatively lengthy time period, since this study was to be carried out by the researcher part-time, whilst actively working in the field.

3.2. Research approach or strategy²⁰

²⁰ Although in common parlance they have slightly different definitions, some researchers use the words approach and strategy in the same context, to mean a high-level view of the methods to be employed to achieve the research outcomes, which I believe is the case in Kock (2003) and Oates (2006), and I shall continue with this usage. This is confirmed by Potter (1996, p.13) who states: "An approach is composed of a set of assumptions, goals, and methods. Qualitative is one kind of approach."

According to Kock (2003, p.108) the common research approaches are experimental, survey, case and action research which are in a table. Oates (2006, p.35) lists six research strategies, survey, design & creation, experiment, case study, action research and ethnography. Borrowing Kock's table example, both lists are presented in a new table, Table 3.2, below.

Table 3.2 – Comparative action research strategies

Kock	Oates	Description
Survey	Survey	Looking for patterns from the same kinds of information from a large group in a standard way.
	Design & creation	Developing new product
Experimental	Experiment	Investigation of cause & effect relationships
Action research	Action research	Plan something in a real situation, act upon it, reflect upon the result and then reiterate, as required.
	Case study	Focus upon a single instance or a small sample
Case research		A small sample researched in depth
	Ethnography	Researcher spends time in field as part of the group rather than as an observer.

Oates suggests that “one research question has one research strategy”, but that two are permissible if you have time to use them. Examining the questions involved in this research, the study is essentially looking for how service delivery in local government can be monitored to ensure that efficient and satisfactory service can be provided overall. For practicality, informed by a practitioner viewpoint, the research seeks the simplest model or formula possible to measure this by. To date proposals have been made, which appear excessively complex (see Di Maio, 2007, European Commission, 2006, for example).

Baskerville (1999, p.7) lists three characteristics of the social setting for action research:

“1. the researcher is actively involved, with expected benefit for both researcher and organisation,

2. the knowledge obtained can be immediately applied, there is not the sense of the detached observer, but that of an active participant wishing to utilize any new knowledge based on an explicit clear conceptual framework,

3. the research is a (typically cyclical) process linking theory and practice.”

This was in line with the “field study” mode of action research as described by West & Stansfield (2000, p.252) where a well documented generic “problem”, of which the researcher has personal experience, is addressed by the researcher employing a theory, reflecting on the results, and refining the theory. In fact Wastell et al (2004, p.651) argue that:

“the theory generated by action research reflects the dynamics and complexity of the real world milieu in which it was developed. Rather than a weakness, we see this as a source of strength. The theory is richer, more relevant and holistic than its conventional counterpart. Moreover, it has been evaluated in the crucible of real-world intervention.”

Which describe the setting and proposed methodology for this research and Herr & Anderson (2007, p.4) quote McCutcheon & Jung (1990) that “the goals of such research are the understanding of practice and the articulation of a rationale or philosophy of practice in order to improve practice”. Which describes the aims of the research and hence, the researcher considers that action research provides the correct approach on this occasion. This is further supported by Azhar (2007, p.5) who states that “the holistic nature of action research approach makes it an ideal candidate for multidisciplinary investigations involving technological, human and organizational aspects”. Marshak & Heracleous (2005, p.73) viewed action research:

“as a process of both helping organizations as well as gathering data for further scholarly reflection and potential reflection and potential contribution to knowledge, wherein the researcher is an active, reflective participant in whatever effort is underway.”

Which is primarily the case with this research. This is further supported by Lofman et al (2004, p.333) who list amongst action research's attributes that it has been used "in respect of management issues", "for consciousness raising", "as a method of narrowing the theory-practice gap" and "with and for people rather than on people". DeLuca et al (2008, p.49) state that "there are many forms of AR", whilst Ng-Kruelle et al (2006, p.7) list some as "participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextual action research". De Villiers (2005, p.119) in presenting action research as one of three pillars for interpretivist IS research (along with grounded theory and development research) suggests its application in e-commerce, new technologies, participative studies and user-centric systems, all of which are within the context of this research. In fact, the level of action research proposed is such, with a "declared-in-advance intellectual framework", that the research could incorporate Soft Systems Methodologies within the cycles (as described by Sankaran et al 2008) enabling the modelling techniques to be refined on that basis. The research will employ social networking tools that could be categorised as Delphi, as described by Buckley (1995, p.17) in that "it can be used as a poll or guide to potential problems or feasible aims". However, unlike Delphi, the research will be clearly underpinned by theory and multiple tools will be employed.

This confirms, further to the broader examination of theory in Section 3.1. Introduction: philosophy, theory and model, that action research would be a suitable research approach for the questions. Having established the approach to be used, it is now necessary to consider the process in detail.

3.3. Research process

This section examines the specific literature regarding action research and outlines suitable process steps for the study. One author, describing Participatory Action Research, Whyte (1989, p.384) stated that:

“creative surprises are most likely to occur if we get out of our academic morass and seek to work with practitioners whose knowledge and experience is quite different from our own. For this purpose, it is inefficient to treat practitioners as passive informants. They can contribute far more to our own learning if we arrange to make some of them active participants in the research enterprise.”

Oates & Fitzgerald (2001, p.3) provide a tabular conceptual framework for action research setting out five ‘P’s they consider a requirement for a valid study, which is summarised below in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3 – 5 Ps, extract from Oates & Fitzgerald (2001, p.3)

Factor	Operationalisation Steps	Validity Criteria
Paradigm	Decide research paradigm	Explanation of approach
Purpose	Define research objective	Explicitly stated theoretical framework
	Define research questions	
	Define intellectual framework of ideas	
Participants	Identify and describe the research participants	Extent of participation acknowledged
	Discuss research motivations	Problems of student co-researchers addressed
		Vigilance against delusion
Process	Gain access	Integration of action and research
	Select & follow a process model	Research cycling
	Generate & analyse data	Paradigm consistency
		Ethical behaviour
Product	Identify practical outcomes	Judgement of success
	Identify learning outcomes	Restrained generalisations

Oates (2006, pp 11-13) later adds a sixth factor of “presentation”.

By following these six factors which, Oates (2006, p.11) states need to be considered by any research project, the researcher intends to work towards the validity of the research. The first four are outlined within this section of the thesis, having been established in the first two chapters. The penultimate one, the Product, will be developed in the following three chapters, CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH, CHAPTER 5 - FOUNDATIONS OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT, A DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH and CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THIS INVESTIGATION INTO ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT, whilst the final one, presentation, will be

achieved by employing the weblog, ongoing publication and the final thesis. Additional robustness for the data will be achieved by combining the survey with other methods, in this case by a series of interviews, as examined by McCalla (2002, p.62) who states that “one may want to conduct an online survey in conjunction with more traditional methods in a bid to improve reliability and validity of the data collected”.

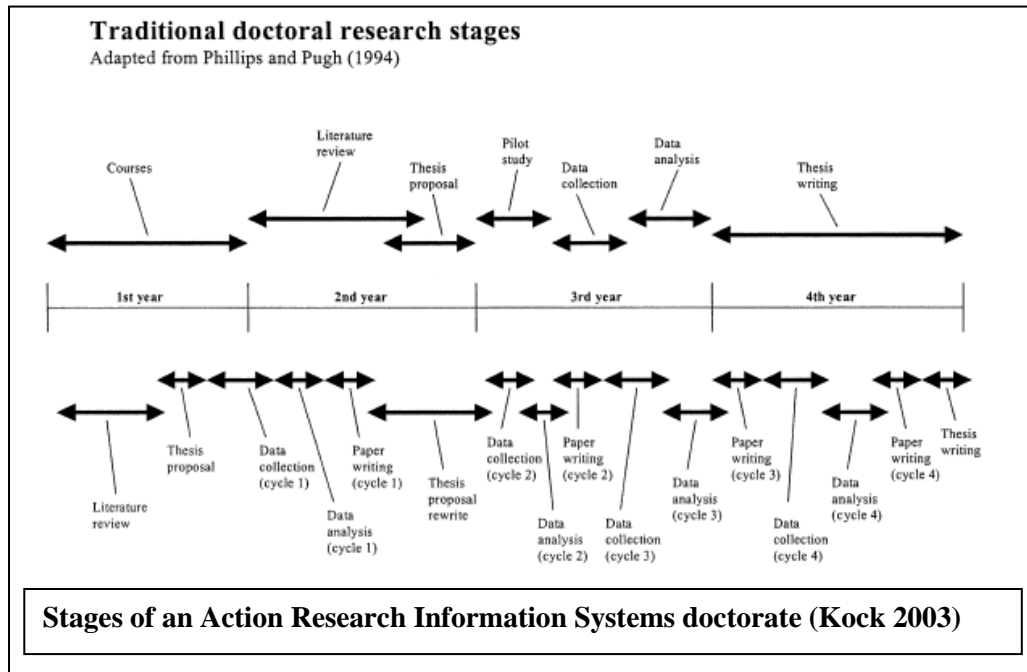
Studies by Roster, Rogers & Albaum (2004, p.371), Dillaman, Tortora & Bowker (1999, pp.7-8) and Rowe, Poortinga & Pidgeon (2006, p.373) indicate that the use of electronic surveys is a satisfactory tool, although some additional issues to need to be borne in mind including in that they might:

- over-represent some groups, whilst under-representing others
- provide access to wider populations
- deliver sample and non-response bias
- present ethical issues such by ‘spamming’
- have a potentially higher drop-out rate

The above description of the research process, following Oates (2006), displays a combination of qualitative and some quantitative research with active intervention being carried out throughout the process, which complies with the earlier definition of action research, although it has survey methods to support it. The stages of research, are, as a result, different to a traditional doctoral route, as is graphically illustrated by Kock (2003, p.118) in Figure 3.1, since the data collection, analysis and writing are carried out in a series of cycles (as displayed below the time line), rather than in single phases (as in the example above the time line), although the researcher’s timescales may be different to those in Kock’s example. As can be seen in the top half of the illustration, traditional research is a series of sequential exercises culminating in the final one, that of writing the thesis. The lower half of the illustration indicates the cyclical, more dynamic, nature of an action research doctorate with data collection, writing and analysis occurring on multiple occasions, the outputs

from which will influence the stages following. This latter model is the one being followed in this research.

Figure 3.1 – Traditional doctoral research stages – Kock (2003, p.118)



There is now a need to identify how such a process might be carried out in reality, employing the planned range of instruments within the data collection cycles, whilst containing the research to be seen as a whole, as was done in practice.

3.4. Methods deployed and developed

The researcher has maintained an approach in line with Checkland & Holwell (1997, p.18) where they state that “the aim in AR should be to *enact* a process based on a declared-in-advance methodology (encompassing a particular framework of ideas)” and similarly with McKay & Marshall (2007, p.155) who argue that:

"the conduct of action research may be enhanced through conceptualising action research as being comprised two interconnected cycles of interest: a problem solving interest, in which researchers and participants collaborate to ameliorate and change a situation of concern, and in so doing, hopefully learn about the problem, and the problem solving process, and a research interest, in which researchers adopting a particular theoretical stance clarify their objectives and required actions in terms of building understanding and advancing knowledge within a domain of interest."

Following the description in Section 3.3. Research process, the research, as envisaged, consisted of a number of sequential steps with some parallel background work. The background work would be creating a host environment, a weblog, for the proposed solution that would carry questionnaires, the model and any enhancements to it or comments around its development, presentations or any interesting papers. This could be promoted in the same manner as any website using both electronic means, as a footer on emails, by mentioning the research on electronic forums and providing the address of the web site. It was also possible to do promotion offline by handing out leaflets and business cards with the web address and details on at the many conferences and meetings an ICT manager attends.

In this way the weblog provided a natural platform to facilitate the two-way interaction with practitioners. This same circle of contacts would also be used to gain access to further audiences to present the research to, and that by being forthright and publicly discussing the matter this would increase interest and attention in the subject. Having gained some broad opinions on the areas in question by the use of a first questionnaire (hosted on the weblog), these could be published and then tested by a second (again hosted on the weblog) after a twelve month time period to observe any changes in the market. The outcomes from the questionnaires would be presented at events, formally or informally, along with being disseminated via the weblog. Such feedback gained, either through the questionnaires, from the website or from speaking at events, might then be clarified at a deeper level by interviewing a small number of senior

government officers who had current responsibility for delivering services. This might fall within that research strategy described by Brosveet (2002, p.102) where he states:

“interpretative information systems research [...] has developed out of the need for research in information systems to focus on social and cultural contexts, dealing with people’s assumptions, beliefs and desires. In some cases, this is combined with action research in order for the researcher to be closely involved with the people and technologies that are being studied.”

Similarly the use of such a broad range of approaches is in agreement with Fals-Borda (2001, p.33) who argued that “we know that rigour in our work can be gained by combining quantitative measures, when needed, with relevant, well-made qualitative and or ethnographic descriptions and critique” and “pertinent validity criteria can be derived as well from common sense, with inductive/deductive examination of results in practice, from *vivencia* or empathic involvement in processes and with the considered judgement of local reference groups.” The processes outlined fitting such criteria.

With the three goals of action research described by Lewin (1946) and summarised by Sommer (2009, p.228) being “to advance knowledge”, “to improve a concrete situation” and “to improve behavioural science methodology”, Sommer (2009, p.228) then goes onto state that “innovative dissemination strategies are necessary” and accepts the importance of “online mailing lists, Web pages, blogs, lectures, films video, TV and radio interviews, and personal consultation in the diffusion of research findings”. This is additionally developed by Rosemann and Vessey (2008, p.3) when they argue that “an applicability check would improve future research by incorporating learnings into revisions to theories or models, as well as sensitizing the practitioner community to a body of research”. On this basis, employing the weblog, a novel dissemination strategy, as research host and feedback

mechanism, with other more traditional methods, would prove to be very suitable. Weblogs, and social media in general, had limited literature supporting their use as research instruments at the start of the research, apart from researchers such as Mortensen & Walker (2002, p.265), who having employed weblogs in their own doctoral research, stated that:

“For researchers who are studying online phenomena [sic], the weblog is perfectly suited to this work of connecting dispersed discoveries, at the same time as a weblog allows us to share this found information, and to participate in discussions around it. Trailblazing in a weblog can be an element of research and a dissemination of that research at the same time.”

This was confirmed in Walker (2006), and similarly by Ribstein (2006, p.1220), who concluded that weblogs “may enable academics to climb down from the ivory tower whilst bringing some of their purer air with them”. Whilst Wakeford & Cohen (2008, p.1) argue that:

“Some researchers are adapting the blog to fit their disciplinary approaches, which draw largely on qualitative research and ethnographic traditions of writing, In fact one of the most interesting potentials of blogging is how the activity can emphasise and expose the process of doing research, both to ourselves as researchers and to participants. Even though blogs are sometimes dismissed as purely personal chronicles, they do have the potential to change the ways in which data collection, data analysis, and writing up are carried out.”

Which aligns with the thinking of this researcher, particularly when they add, regarding the commenting feature of weblogs (p.9), that “there are possibilities, as yet unexplored, for this to be used in participatory research that explicitly seeks to involve those who are researched as *participants*”, which is the role of the weblog in this research. The researcher’s aim was to attract comments in response to his posts on the weblog that might qualify the research by identifying good practice and supporting, developing or even contradicting the proposed model, as sought by the refined research questions presented at the end of Section 2.8. Key research questions, The ability to gather feedback through a weblog was highlighted by Blair & Level (2008, p.161) in their review of weblogs for academic librarians, stating that “the use of comments is another

common means of tracking success of a blog. In fact the comments feature is one of the selling points of blogs – readers have an opportunity to comment and express their opinions”. However, with the cross-posting of weblog entries²¹, feedback may be provided by comments on the cross-posting weblog or website, along with the potential for additional commentary by the cross-poster, which will only be indirectly available to the original author, if they are aware of it. Attempting to maintain awareness of other weblogs is possible when referrers are open and provide links back to the originator, but this courtesy isn’t always afforded! So that, without checking regularly across a number of websites, feedback is missed. Unfortunately, time frequently limits such close attention.

Most recently Procter et al (2010, p.4040) have defined scholarly communications as:

- “conducting research, developing ideas and informal communications;
- preparing, shaping and communication what will become formal research outputs;
- the dissemination of formal products;
- managing personal careers and research teams and research programmes;
- communicating scholarly ideas to broader communities.”

Although further observed by Procter et al (2010, p.4044) that “use by the UK research community of Web 2.0 in novel forms of scholarly communication is currently rather low” and only identify a small group of users, along with some

²¹ Although the researcher was posting to a single weblog entitled ‘The Great E-mancipator’, this was later syndicated to <http://www.localgov.co.uk>, and [http://europa-eu-audience.typepad.com/en/with his permission](http://europa-eu-audience.typepad.com/en/with-his-permission). However, postings were also being reproduced on other blogs such as <http://www.govloop.com> and <http://governingpeople.com>, with them sometimes appearing to be the source. The researcher also posted comments with links back to the researcher’s weblog on other relevant weblogs.

learning taking place. Weblogs, wikis and podcasts were identified by Sauer et al (2005), Kane & Fichman (2009), Pena-Lopez (2008) and Kamel Boulos, Maramba & Wheeler (2006) as useful tools for communicating and collaboration by researchers. This low usage may be as a result of the difficulty in measuring the influence of media such as weblogs as concluded by Gill (2004), although weblogs have proved transformational in the area of agenda-setting, once the domain of mainstream media, as described by Delwiche (2005).

The limited use of weblogs in research was similarly observed by Hookway (2008), at the same time accepting the benefits and pitfalls of their use, which were extensively developed by the researcher in two conference papers, Phythian, Fairweather & Howley (2009, Annex 9 – Ethicomp 2008 Paper Abstract), and Phythian, Fairweather & Howley (2010, Annex 11 – Ethicomp 2010 Paper Abstract). With a similar approach Fielding, Lee & Black (2008, p.12) warn that while “blogging does offer a straightforward way to publish material and create a space for interaction on the Internet”, “The accounts of researchers who have actually used blogs number very few so far.” Another supporter of the employment of weblogs as research instruments, Murthy (2008), reports their description by Lassiter (2005) as “collaborative ethnography” in a paper entitled “Digital ethnography”, ethnography being a method that may be considered within action research toolbox. Vanattenhoven (2008) also describes the benefits of social media applications as research tools.

There had been a number of papers about how *the public* use weblogs, such as Nardi, Schiano & Gumbrecht (2004) and Nardi et al (2004) or about the *sociology* of social media as with Beer & Burrows (2007). Some authors, including Hendricks (2009), contended weblogs’ value as scholarly publications or ‘digital scholarship’. Fiedler (2003) promotes them as a “reflective conversational learning tool for self-organised learning”, which in the matter of requiring this researcher to obtain and publish material appropriate both to the

weblog and the research is correct and similarly, when observed by Kjellberg (2009, p.30) as an interface between “the research field, the general public, private life and the university”, is also a truism, if by “university” we assume academia in general. In general, however, research employing weblogs as instruments appeared sparse.

The first step was to generate an initial questionnaire of thirteen questions (expected to be less than fifteen questions occupying no more than two pages, as suggested by Exploring Online Research Methods (n.d.)), to be completed online, although paper (and electronic paper) were made available, as well. From the experience of Phythian & Taylor (2001), something over a 40% response rate might have been expected from local authorities, with some encouragement. However, that was a postal survey with a pre-paid envelope. The feedback then might be returned from a range of sources and analysed according to categories. The questionnaires sought insights into existing examples of measurement models and qualitative feedback. No statistical comparison was anticipated, although the research might have involved some. Limited response rates and other issues mean that the research samples are non-probabilistic and may skew any quantitative analysis. However the researcher bore these considerations in mind but was primarily aiming at qualitative feedback.

Copies of the blank research instruments are in Annex 4 – Research Instruments. The foundation instrument is the weblog which is entitled ‘The Great E-mancipator’²², a screen shot of which is available in Annex 4.1. The

²² The original Great Emancipator was Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America from 1861 until 1865, and probably its greatest leader. He gained the title for delivering the Emancipation Proclamation which freed slaves during the American Civil War. It has also been employed as a term to represent the role of some machines in the Industrial Revolution, such as the sewing machine in female emancipation. The researcher has reemployed it as a title to this weblog, since many of those in power would appear to seek or have

Weblog. This is designed to collect information and feedback on an ongoing basis, along with encouraging completion of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were to be made available electronically (both on the web and via email), as well as in paper, to encourage maximum feedback. Mixed-mode surveys have been studied by Meckel, Walters & Baugh (2005) and been found to be successful.

In parallel, it was proposed to present the model (Figure 2.2), discussed in Section 2.8. Key research questions, on a weblog, which would be promoted via existing organizations and electronic newsletters in the field, such as the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm), Public Sector Forums and the e-Government Newsletter, to seek feedback on the model and further examples that may have been missed in the initial questionnaire. The weblog was to provide a host for the two questionnaires planned, along with feedback on the results, presenting the research as a whole and helping to develop a culture of trust around the reason for the questionnaires and later interviews. People involved with e-government came to appreciate the persona of 'The Great E-mancipator' and what the researcher was trying to achieve. This was exemplified by comments, reported in full in Annex 12 – Weblog post analysis, such as "This is interesting – thanks for reporting on it" in December 2008 and "I completely agree with this post" in February 2009. It was also hoped that the weblog might act as a source of qualitative data and a means of contacting those interested who might provide qualitative responses through other means. In general, there was no change of direction of the research provoked by comments on the weblog, although the researcher was open to such possibilities, the key benefit being that the responses gave support to the aim and direction of the research with no apparent resistance or contradiction in the practitioner or academic communities.

sought political success from the adoption of electronic government by their respective publics as a means of improving performance and reducing costs.

The initial questionnaire was designed to provide a general indication of the state of service usage measurement and metrics in the local government community. This would be reported on the weblog to the wider community and a presentation made to the practitioner community as part of the action research intervention. The second questionnaire, whilst echoing some questions from the initial one, to monitor changes in service usage measurement, would hope to identify some recognition of the employment of citizen-derived metrics within the practitioner community, as would be advocated on the weblog posting and potentially deprecated by responses. The interviews were designed to tease out in further detail any changes in practice between the time of the first and the second questionnaire, along with employing the experience of the interviewees chosen to further challenge the value of the model being used.

This whole cycle of questionnaire, questionnaire, interviews with feedback between them was intended to develop an ongoing iterative process, with the weblog integral to each iteration, which would then hopefully reflect on the real world and generate some best practice within the greater practitioner group; if not, an additional exercise would need to be carried out to find out why. As had been hoped, some topics on the weblog resulted in a dialogue and a 'synthetic' type of working. For example a question by a reader on the cost of channels was answered in some depth by the researcher providing details obtained from a range of sources, but then the details, along with further analysis, were directed into the dissertation (in Section 2.3.8. Cost of service delivery). That particular weblog comment was further reported by a major government ICT supplier on their own website, hence the ongoing synthesis of information, accompanied by practical routes for feedback into practice.

Following the feedback to the questionnaires and weblog the researcher intended to identify a smaller group which was willing to be subject to further surveying and possibly interviews, in order to gain further insights as to any rationale behind measuring progress in service delivery, along with its affect on

public confidence and trust and hence public value and social capital as described by Fountain (2001a) and Kelly, Mulgan & Muers (2002) within Section 2.6. Public value and social capital. Whilst the respondents to the initial questionnaire were included in the circulation for the second one, a smaller group was not developed as a result of the staffing changes that were identified during the following years. It was then decided to construct the group to be interviewed on a more static basis, as is described in greater detail in Section 4.6. Phase 3 of the research.

The ongoing research considers any change in the usage or development of quantitative tools that can be used to monitor service delivery within English local government. This is provided from the feedback to survey instruments, interviews, presentations and weblogs, along with continued literature review. The researcher would also need to “pay particular attention to methods of documenting events”, as described by West & Stansfield (2000, p.274) in their analysis of the use of action research by information systems researchers along with providing reportage “geared toward the interests and concerns of the collaborators”, whilst focusing on “practical lessons and findings arising from the research”, (West & Stansfield, 2000, p.178). In addition, as highlighted in their view from structuration theory, the research needs to account for the conclusion of Heinze & Hu (2005, p.901) that “the amount of research in the field continues to grow, but most of it reflects ideas taken from the technological imperative”. This research needs to “take into account the fact that social and organizational structures undergo constant change, with information technology itself an integral element of those structures”. Further, as Osborne (2009, p.6) points out:

“we need to understand public services delivery as a *dynamic system* where organizations, services and users interact to co-produce public services. This goes beyond its comprehension as “simple” interorganizational networks. Rather, it recognizes that service technology, service users/consumers and service organizations are all in interaction in the production of public services.”

Hence the qualitative context to the research is of supreme importance. In fact, before the survey, a local government reorganization took place across the country. This was supplemented by constant restructuring and reshuffling at individual local authorities for cost-saving purposes, demonstrating the dynamic nature of public services.

Where suitable data was forthcoming, quantitative analysis would be done from the survey data to gain insights into change in usage, however it was expected to be mainly qualitative material about the types and value of monitoring and this would be analysed accordingly. The employment of a weblog hosting questionnaires and feeding back the results electronically and publicly fits in with the action research process envisaged for ICT and new media by Hearn & Foth (2005, p.90) by seeking “to make this public and challengeable by all members of the research community” and “for secondary consumers of the research to make sense of the results, some process for distilling outputs is necessary”. Thus, if the various desired audiences of the research are to interact, the information fed back must be presented in such a manner as to be digestible by them all.

The approach and process being established, the next stage is to develop suitable research instruments. Having adopted an approach with multiple stages, the instruments were to be two annual questionnaires, a series of interviews in the third year and a weblog to act as a ongoing feedback loop and host for the model and questionnaires, along with intervening presentations, all of which together are to be seen as a whole, and a description of the piloting of which follows next

3.5. Piloting the instruments

The weblog was originally set up during the literature review and various postings were made regarding the different models proposed. This was further enhanced over a period as the research model developed, which enabled further detail of the model to be posted. By the time of the pilot four months of postings had been established, although the weblog itself had not been promoted to a wider public.

Six individuals were chosen to pilot the instruments, who whilst not currently working in government, serve as consultants to it. They had experience in advising on electronic government and customer perspectives. They received an electronic copy of the paper questionnaire along with the link to the weblog, although a reminder was sent that included a link to the questionnaire as an e-form and some responded on that document and to that design.

Of the six, five responded with feedback about the weblog, the questionnaire or both from the particular professional angles they were situated in. This supported the researcher's view that there was a gap in the knowledge, this being around the nature and use of suitable metrics of service delivery. The replies also indicated that the research and approach were credible and that, following some adjustments to focus the attentions of those being invited, the instruments would provide data to address the knowledge gap.

3.5.1. Feedback regarding the questionnaire

Various comments were received from those piloting the instruments which can be summarised as follows:

- List of channels, could perhaps use the new Socitm one as a standard?
- Possible benefits other than customer satisfaction may be worth examining

- How will satisfaction be measured?
- Will it be in MS Word or Excel?
- Contact information
- E-form permitted only one choice, when it should allow multiples
- Likert scale (1-7) aggregates subjective opinions into a reasonable quantification that can be used as a good measure
- Respondents were generally critical of the National Indicator 14 metric

This indicates that the pilot subjects were supportive of the aims of the research and that they assisted by developing the instrument design to permit increased data capture. The exercise also demonstrates that the data is capable of informing the knowledge gap and responding to the research questions.

3.5.2. Data analysis following questionnaire pilot

Only a nominal amount of data was returned with the small pilot but following the restructure of the questionnaire, as a result of feedback, the survey data returned would have potentially added unwanted complexity to the survey. The researcher was keen to ensure that the survey remained straightforward and easy to complete, with the minimal number of questions (less than 15, as already stated) so decided that the small additional work in restructuring the output data would be offset by the additional views the data was seen to provide in analysis. In fact, although the researcher had originally expected the quantitative analysis to be minimal, the review and restructure of the data offered the chance for the possibility of some unexpected quantitative results that were not originally planned for.

Although only a minimal quantity of data was returned, as could only be expected from six pilot subjects, this was sufficient with only thirteen questions,

which were largely seeking qualitative data, to demonstrate that the questionnaire would be a viable instrument for the first phase of the research.

3.5.3. Feedback regarding the weblog

The initial responses to postings on the weblog were received through email, rather than on the weblog, indicating one of the limitations of the method. People seemed unwilling to air their opinions in public, for whatever reason. As indicated by the last comment, there was a need to make commenting as easy as possible, without allowing spam. The summary comments are as follows:

- Need to find a “few damn good measures and not 198” (*This was a comment on the government’s National Indicator set, which includes NI14 discussed in Section 2.3.4. NI14*)
- Need to be measures not targets
- Need to be measures that help councils not act as comparisons
- Not what channels they use but what service they get
- What about customers you need but aren’t in the loop?
- The original weblog required registration, which was confusing and slowing down busy potential users. This was removed but still requests contact details.

Demonstrating that the weblog appeared satisfactory, whilst the main issues were considerations of the subject matter, which had been the aim of the instrument.

3.5.4. Data analysis following the weblog pilot

The first phase of the research was expected to be qualitative with comments on the model proposed being used to improve or correct it. The feedback to the weblog indicated that the pilot subjects felt strongly about the subject matter

and that debate around the subject area could generate suitable feedback when the weblog was promoted to the professional audience. The researcher has also found the weblog useful for drafting and promoting small sections of text extracted from the literature review, since the audience is expected to have little acquaintance with the wider academic literature surrounding the topic.

3.5.5. Summary of the findings from the pilot

The responses from the pilot were used to refine the questionnaire, along with generating extra content on the weblog and ensuring that the key subject matter was clear in both. The feedback stated that the weblog was good but until real-life debate is commenced, there will be nothing learned. One respondent requested a direct link to a document named which indicated that the content was of sufficient interest to be worth the effort of a specific request. Having successfully piloted the initial questionnaire and the host weblog, this then opened the way for the first phase of the research, which would then be followed by a further two phases, each with its own pilot.

The route map selected was expected to provide direction when seeking to answer the research questions. Key dates in that process are listed in Annex 7 – Significant dates in research and CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH, which follows, contains the responses to the research instruments and analysis of the data ,which also indicates that this was a suitable and productive approach.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

4.1. Introduction

As proposed in CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, the research was to have three main phases, two employing questionnaires as the research instruments, the third being a series of interviews. In the background would be the weblog, hosting surveys, analyses and the background to the research, (rational and ethical). In line with the principles of action research the learning from the phases would be reflected upon, and where possible fed back into the practitioner community. The learning from each phase would also influence those phases following. Research instruments need to be piloted to test their reliability and this was an initial task in each case.

This chapter follows the sequence of the actual research process. Following an outline of the pilot discussed previously in Section 3.5. Piloting the instruments, there follows the presentation to the public of the weblog and questionnaire in Section 4.2. Phase 1 of the research, this is then reviewed before proceeding to Section 4.3. Phase 2 of the research, which itself is reviewed in turn. The results from the two phases are compared in Section 4.4. Comparison of phases 1 and 2, this further refines the research questions for Section 4.6. Phase 3 of the research. Remaining in place through the other phases, and after, is the weblog, which is considered in Section .

Having constructed the draft weblog, a pilot questionnaire in paper form with the ethical guidelines attached was emailed to a select panel of six people working in the government information technology field as consultants, whom the researcher had personal and professional acquaintance with. Whilst they were not working directly as local government ICT or customer service practitioners, they would be involved and experienced enough to provide critical feedback on the draft instruments before they were publicly released. The initial test was done in mid-February 2008, with additional tests being carried out on later

questionnaires, to ensure they were attractive enough to encourage practitioners to complete them.

4.2. Phase 1 of the research

The first phase of the research commenced on the 14th April 2008. The researcher had named the weblog 'the Great E-mancipator' (<http://greatemancipator.wordpress.com>) to follow the research theme and provide a memorable title. A screen shot of the web page is provided at Annex 4.1. The Weblog. The launch date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln the original Great Emancipator. The launch was carried out by a mass emailing describing the research and providing a link to the weblog and questionnaire, with due care for ethical responsibilities²³, to a list of known ICT Managers, Customer Service Managers or those believed to have some responsibility in the research area. Alongside the mailing to local government professionals, a separate mailing took place to a sample section of researchers, consultants and journalists who it was believed would assist with promotion.

Whilst a limited number of questionnaires had been completed in the first six weeks (28 in total) and only a few comments received directly on the weblog, the responses covered a range of local authorities in England, along with attracting direct and very positive feedback from those working in the area of electronic government or change management. Following a dialogue on the weblog and with individuals who had read entries, it was believed that it was and remained a useful instrument, particularly to preview findings from the

²³ A clear link at the top of the weblog (see Annex 4.1. The Weblog) and repeated in appropriate places through the text, along with covering letters attached to the questionnaires and sent to interviewees, made clear the ethics behind the research and methods employed. The letter sent to interviewees, Annex 4.6. Interview ethical approval 2010 demonstrates the standard wording.

literature and additional research. A brief reminder was emailed to the initial list (with corrections) on the 20th May 2008.

One considered difficulty was attracting responses from specialists in the area. The initial emails had been directed to ICT Managers and Customer Service Managers, who it was thought might be the nearest appropriate contacts and might pass the email on to a colleague able to answer the questions. The researcher believed that this area of work (perhaps described as customer engagement or insight, which overlaps ICT, customer service, performance and web management) was a very new area of practice within local authorities.

Similarly, whilst the literature indicates a need to introduce metrics, the proposed government measure, discussed at length in Section 2.3.4. NI14, is largely considered unsuitable for purpose by those expected to use it, although the data will somehow be gathered and reported. However, where the responsibility for its collection might lie is unclear without that central focus.

Contacting journalists had been a useful exercise and some specialist publications in the area of electronic government (Public Sector Forums and E-Government Bulletin) carried promotions for and links to the research instruments and short pieces were written for them during April 2008.

The researcher also made entries on a number of appropriate electronic discussion forums around transformational and electronic government, whilst these didn't attract much response to the weblog or questionnaire, they did produce responses on the forums themselves. In addition a leaflet was prepared to hand out at meetings the researcher attended including the Electronic Service Delivery Toolkit (ESD-Toolkit), Socitm and the Local Services Chief Information Officer Council, which also enabled the research to be discussed. Details of the study were also broadcast by Socitm to its

membership. Further, as they were discovered, software tools were applied to the weblog enabling subscribers to receive email and RSS feeds, as the site was added to, and the layout of the site was regularly developed to improve its readability and attractiveness.

In July 2008, the researcher was informed by Computer Weekly (a national industry weekly newspaper) that the weblog had been short-listed in the public sector section of its weblog awards, which attracted further promotion from Computer Weekly. When the two winners were announced on the 19th August 2008 the Great Emancipator was not one of them, both of them being aimed at the education sector. However, the site had gained some promotion and remained in the shortlist on the web site:

<http://www.computerweekly.com/blogawards.htm>. Following this, a manager at the publishers of the Municipal Journal, The Municipal Year Book and other publications (Hemming Information Services) contacted the researcher and offered to link to the weblog from a page of weblogs on their specialist site for local government (<http://www.localgov.co.uk>). A sample of their web page is shown at Annex 4.2. The Great E-mancipator syndicated into a national web site. They also reported the weblog in their weekly newsletter to council officers and elected members on a number of occasions, indicating that the weblog as a research instrument is a success.

One issue identified following discussion with colleagues and individuals interested in the research was that a number of government and local government bodies have tools at their Internet and email gateways to prevent users accessing Google (which was used for the questionnaire) and web sites containing the word 'blog', since weblogs are considered a possible tool for use by sexual predators and some education authorities block them generally. When this was realised an alternative URL of <http://greatemancipator.com> was established in case Wordpress was blacklisted. Access to the weblog and questionnaire were then tested by a County Council user, who was permitted to

respond, and a District Council user, who was unable to do the questionnaire and decided to respond from home. Whilst this primarily can be seen as a nuisance to the first phase of this research it does identify a separate issue around the culture of government in that whilst they are seen to be encouraging the use of the Internet by the public, some place quite strict restrictions on its usage by their own employees, which may also be identified as a lack of trust and betray hidden prejudices. Given such an approach by a large number of councils it should be asked whether there is sincerity in the use for electronic government, particularly in the areas of social networking and consultation being proposed by central government. The researcher's experiences were documented in a report on the use of social media in local government, Socitm (2008), as one of the difficulties presented to the changing culture and this is significant to the research.

An abstract of a paper examining the literature review that had been undertaken to-date, outcome and plans for research was submitted for the ETHICOMP 2008 and a paper entitled "Measuring up to e-government, a view from the shelves" (Annex 9 – Ethicomp 2008 Paper Abstract). Due to the nature of the research, this was an additional opportunity to promote the weblog and propositions.

4.2.1. Review of phase 1 of the research

In accordance with the model of an action research doctorate in Figure 3.1. – Traditional doctoral research stages – Kock (2003, p.118), in between the initial and second phases the researcher reviews the research aims and questions. This enables the questions for the second phase to be confirmed and developed.

With over 55 posts and in excess of 5000 visits to the weblog in the initial six months from its launch the site was considered a success. Although it had attracted limited feedback directly to the weblog, there had been sufficient in terms of verbal, email or requests for links that the researcher found it a particularly useful tool to maintain ongoing interest in the topic, an area to generalise around research topics and literature and receive feedback. The use of the weblog as a static host for an ongoing questionnaire permits attention to be drawn to the questionnaire indirectly but also by providing additional background around the questions in the survey, which may assist the respondent in understanding why they are being asked and what the researcher intends to achieve. Considering and describing research by the Hansard Society, Roy (2006, p.xvi) paraphrased it as saying that “blogs are more about publishing and communicating than about listening and debating”, which is this researcher’s experience. It is difficult to establish a dialogue online and in public, although once identified people are willing to debate the concepts in email or offline through public meetings. The weblog is considered in greater depth in Section 4.5. The ongoing weblog.

A report published by North East Improvement Partnership Customer First Network (2008) included online survey research on channel usage carried out against the North East councils during March 2008. Responses to that survey were received from 10 authorities, representing 40% of authorities in the region. Whilst the reported results largely mirror those that were to come from the simultaneous survey as part of this research, the survey findings also reflected and included a conclusion that “organisations are measuring what is easy to measure rather than what is right to measure. There is an uneven focus on input measures over both productivity and quality measures”. A further conclusion was that:

“There are no councils (who responded) who have a fully holistic approach to managing access channels for local services. Customer Services as organisational units tend to be limited to telephone and face-to-face contact with little, if any, control over the web and white post channels or other lower volume channels. Corporate responsibility for

face-to-face remains isolated to one-stop-shops, rather than more broadly applied to all face to face interaction.”

4.2.2. Data analysis of phase 1 of the research

By 1 September 2008 the survey for this research, the questions for which are provided in Annex 4.3. Survey 2008, had received 36 responses across a full range of councils as listed in Table 4.1 and illustrated in Figure 4.1, showing the relative proportions of the different types of authority to demonstrate that a representative range was covered:

Figure 4.1 - Responses by type over base number of authorities (2008)

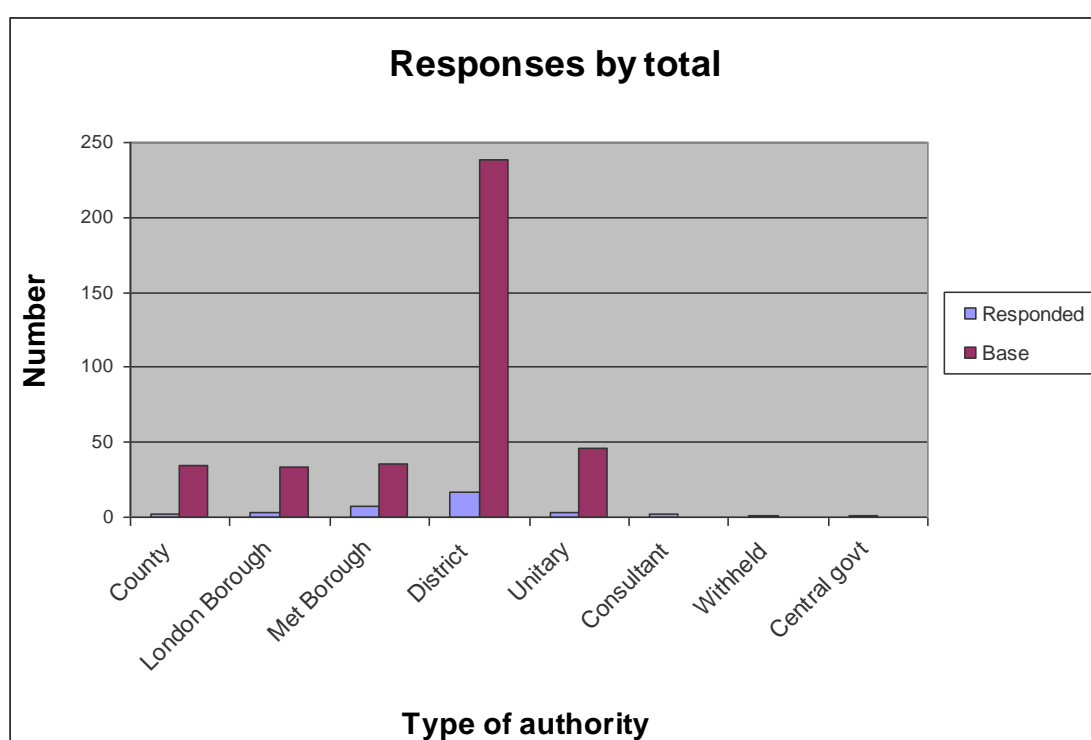


Table 4.1 – Comparison of volume of responses to surveys by type of authority (2008)

Type of authority	No. of responses	No. of authorities	
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		in England	Percentage
County	2	34	6
London Borough	3	33	9
Met Borough	7	36	19
District	17	238	7
Unitary	3	46	7
Consultant	2		
Withheld	1		
Central govt	1		
Foreign	0		
Totals of valid responses	32	387	8

Respondents are from the range of occupations that may have been interested including Heads of ICT at large authorities, Customer Service Managers and specialist consultants. The research, having been carried out at the dawn of implementation of National Indicator 14 around 'avoidable contact' was only likely to gain responses from the advance guard of those considering either how to measure the indicator or the development of indicators to improve their own service delivery.

The responses, as shown in Figure 4.2. and Figure 4.3., indicated that not all channels were currently being used or measured consistently:

Figure 4.2 – Channels used (2008)

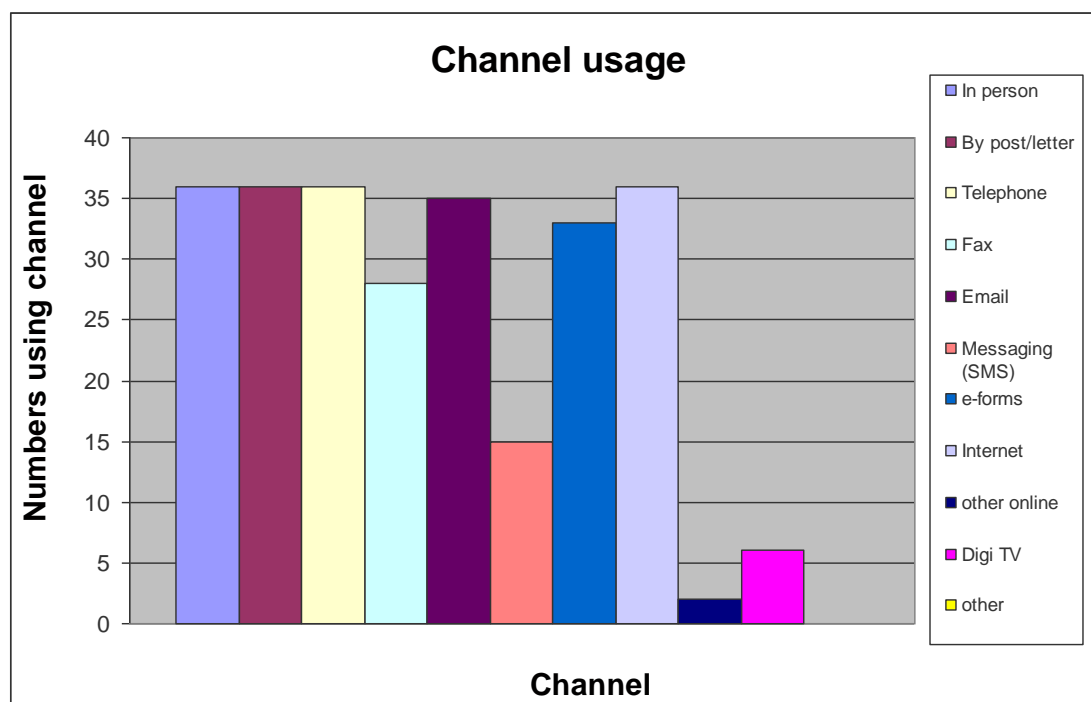
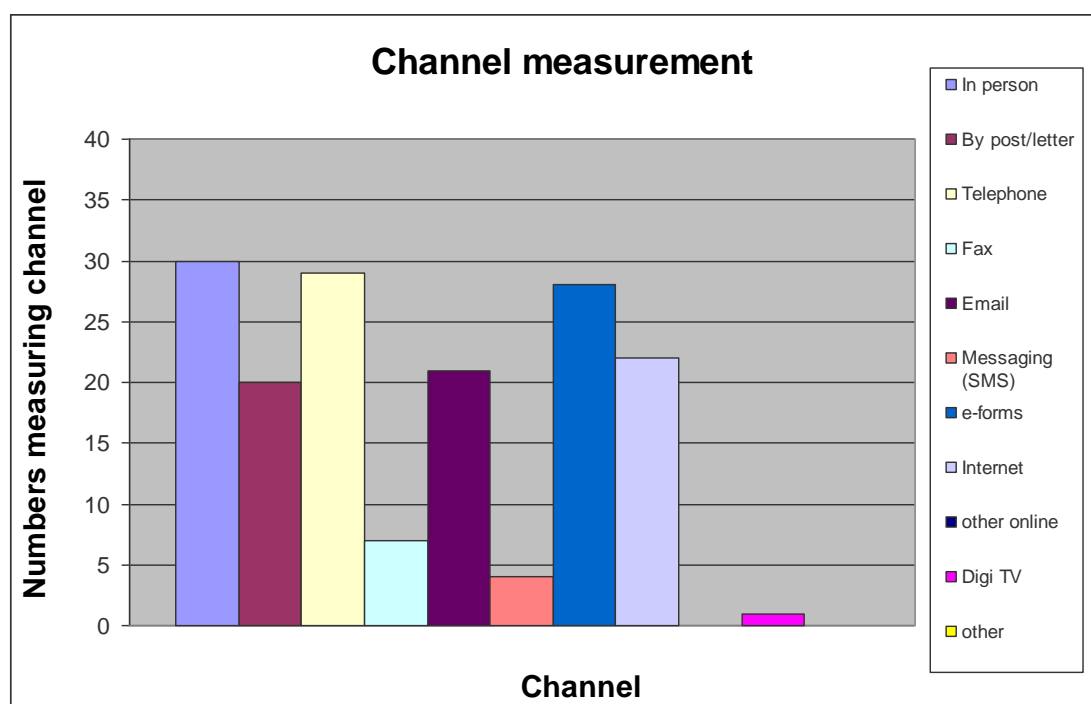
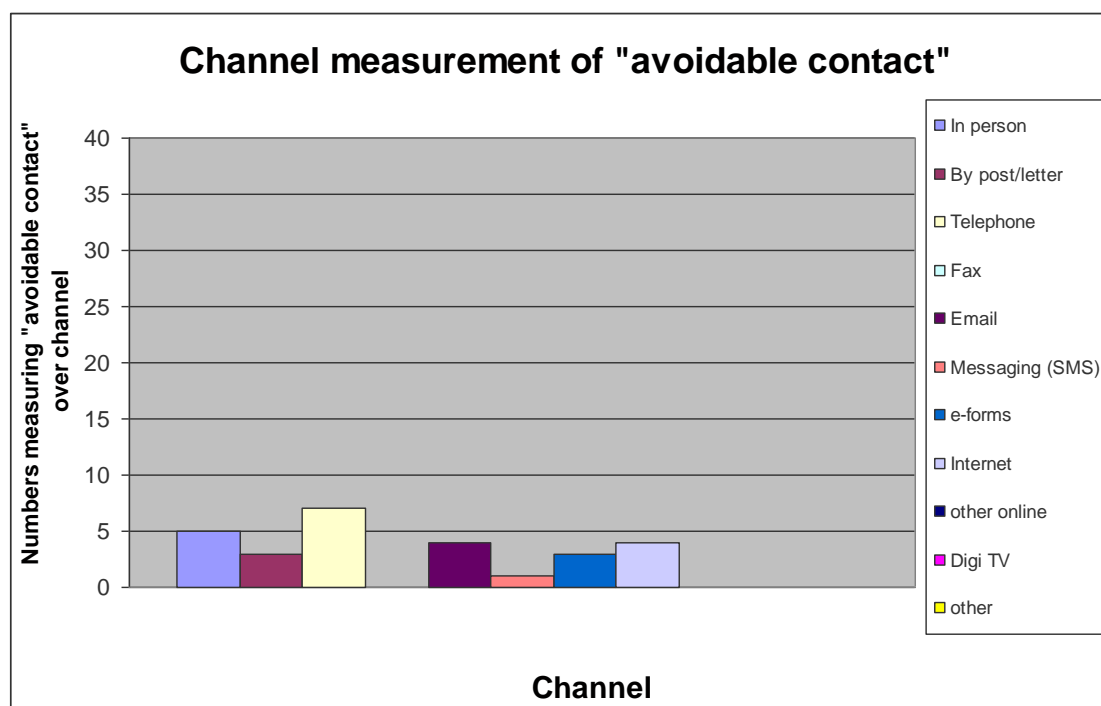


Figure 4.3 – Channels measured (2008)



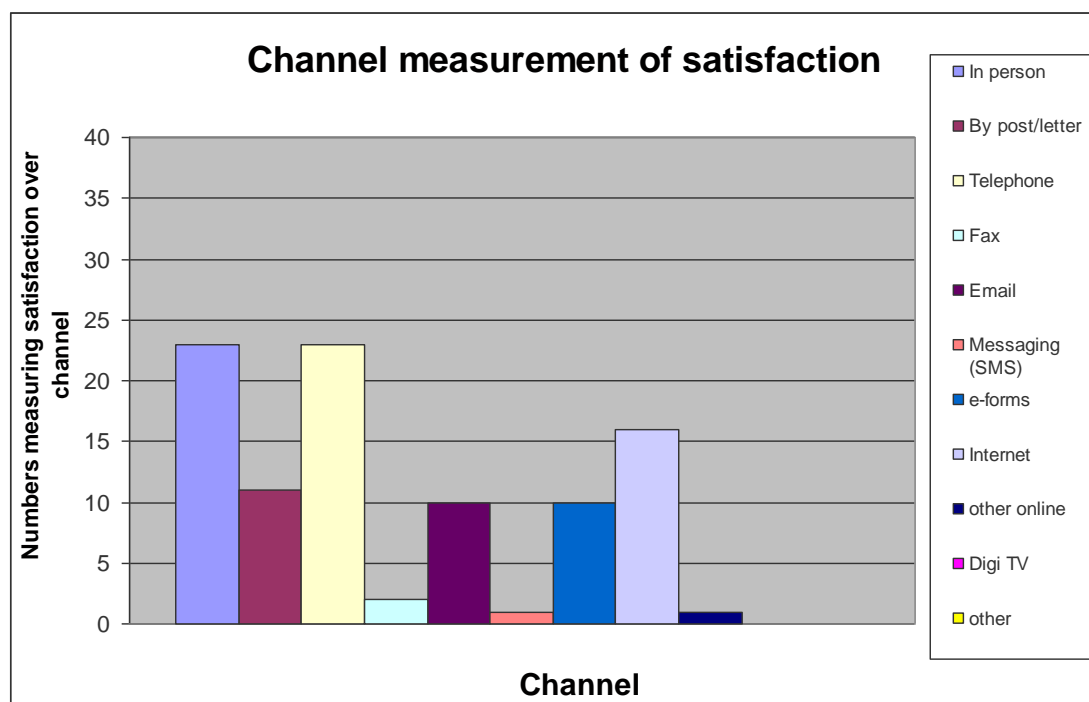
However, when asked about measuring the new national indicator regarding 'avoidable contact' (NI14), the proportion dropped much further, as can be seen from Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 – 'Avoidable contact' measurement (2008)



This is in contrast to being asked whether they already measured satisfaction over the range of channels, which had a greater proportion of use (Figure 4.5., following):

Figure 4.5 – Measurement of satisfaction (2008)



From the textual data, as listed in Annex 5 – Responses to the use of satisfaction as a measure in 2008 survey, it appears that where usage was being measured, it was largely where CRM systems had been installed, although web site statistics were also used, along with telephone usage statistics to provide figures. It is essential that usage is measured as accurately as possible against all channels used to record any change over time, it is also needed to ensure that sufficient resources are applied to the channels to enable them to operate according to public demand.

In terms of 'avoidable contact', a majority were strongly against it, although a number considered it was a good idea in principle or with rewording but should not be used as a target and only to point out areas of services for review.

The use of satisfaction as a measure received broad support with some reservations about definition, clarity and the danger in its use when aggregated

or measured out of context or in the wrong circumstances. In consideration of a scale for 'satisfaction' as a measure, there was no consensus but the researcher believes that, in general, local government managers and administrators lack the understanding of research theory and practice to develop customer feedback mechanisms without the intervention of professionals. A number of the respondents use, or were considering, the GovMetric solution and hence measure on a basic satisfaction scale of 'satisfied', 'don't know', 'dissatisfied'. The responses regarding 'satisfaction' are reported in Annex 5 – Responses to the use of satisfaction as a measure in 2008 survey and in general saw potential in the use of it as a measure (67%) but only 11% were against it whilst the balance didn't respond or some 8% wavered over the definition. This should encourage any attempt to use it as a metric to be semantically clear. This is further reinforced by the responses to the seventh question regarding the scale that 'satisfaction' might be measured on, offering a range of Likert, percentage or binary, which achieved no majority or consensus.

In terms of viable service delivery measurements there was also concern about citizen expectations or that a service meeting its purpose and citizen expectations might not be the same thing! Two particular issues were raised concerning:

- Current media coverage may affect satisfaction reporting in advance of experience
- Value of satisfaction as an indicator may be overrated in regulatory areas

In addition Al Shamsi (2007, p.9) points out that expectations may transfer over from bricks-and-mortar services to Internet and visa-versa.

This was confirmed at a workshop on Customer Insight held by the Esd-Toolkit²⁴ when extracts from the literature, along with the initial results from the survey were presented. Following the presentation feedback was extracted from the attendees in the form of issues and actions required, as follows:

- Issue – focus from a council is on achieving a high satisfaction so that no-one thinks they are failing
- Action – They need to focus on gaining insight from satisfaction information in order to improve services
- Issue - not sure customer satisfaction (CS) methods from different cultures can work here
- Action – The CS method needs to be useful but not superficial. Other methods should be made use of (but adapted) to prevent reinventing the wheel
- Action – if we had ‘service excellence’ standards then we could identify the gaps which lead to improvement
- Issue – Is it possible to satisfy everyone?
- Action – Need to capture the regular failings and remove these
- Action – If we had satisfaction factors, this would help us to understand what is involved
- Action – Customer journey mapping allows you to understand the satisfaction across process rather than just the end

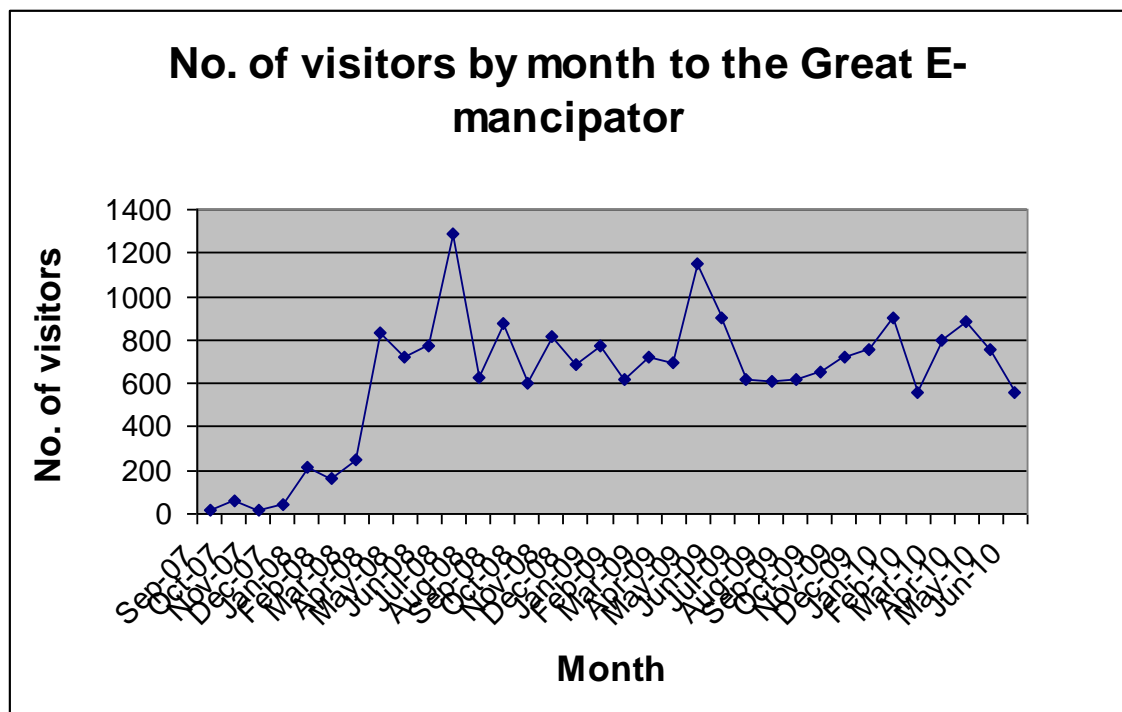
Ensuring the join between the weblog and physical presentations of the research, a number of posts were made regarding both the Esd-Toolkit conference, mentioned above, and the Exchanging Information with the Public (EiP) conference in November 2008, where a presentation entitled “E-

²⁴ 9th October 2008, Preston

government: What does the research suggest?” was delivered. The posts included one entitled, “Who is doing what at the moment in local government? Joined-up research”, about the number of different, and rather separate, organizations involved in e-government research in the UK.

Visitors to the weblog can be observed to be increasing with obvious peaks at points of promotion, although this may also be reaching a peak and levelling out.

Figure 4.6 – Visitors to the Great E-mancipator weblog



During 2008 it became apparent to the researcher that a number of companies were either developing products to record NI14, or modifying existing applications to collect it, in addition to satisfaction or other purposes or being introduced from the developing market for Customer Engagement Management systems in the USA to the UK government and commercial markets, as was discussed towards the end of Section 2.8. Key research questions.

In order to make the practitioners aware of the growing range of possible solutions, along with watching the market develop, the researcher maintained a list of systems being promoted in the UK and contacted suppliers to notify them, particularly when it appeared that their promotion was not in line with the definition or purpose of NI14. A record of responses from some suppliers is in Annex 6 – Communications with software developers.

The research is seeking answers to the questions below, developed from the aims, outlined in Section 1.1. Introduction, and refined from examination of the literature in CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW, and now further refined, following analysis of the research questionnaire feedback, by observing some use of the model and theory to revise the third question, changing ‘whether’, to ask ‘to what extent’

- What systems of measurement, including government required ones, are being employed?
- If, and how well, systems of measurement are guiding multi-channel service delivery?
- Whether the model and theory, or parts of it are being employed, along with citizen satisfaction, within a system of measurement?

The responses to the first phase of the research indicate general absence of a solution across all channels for measuring service delivery quality, although the GovMetric product was gaining ground on some channels. There was also support for a parsimonious metric, along with broad support for the use of satisfaction. The new government NI14 performance indicator, discussed in Section 2.3.4. NI14, was only starting to be measured but with little support. This indicated that the questions were worthwhile, along with the aim of improving multi-channel service delivery, since there was no general solution towards that end and actively influencing the development would be beneficial to the citizen. The next phase would be to monitor any change in channel

measurement between 2008 and 2009, along with an increased focus on the approach to measuring NI14, since this was the single multi-channel measure being employed on a national basis.

4.3. Phase 2 of the research

As part of the research dissemination, in line with the action research method, it had been planned to present findings to varied groups within the industry sector, as had been described in Section 4.2.1. Review of phase 1 of the research, where a presentation and discussion was held at a Customer Insight workshop. The researcher was now approached during August 2008 and invited to present the results of the literature review and initial research to the annual conference of 'Exchanging Information with the Public' (EiP), a cross-service group of UK local authority officers working together to develop modern approaches to service delivery with an emphasis on customer focus, which was identified as a suitable event. The presentation was developed with the consultant managing the group to encourage participation from the audience, who would have already spent time in workshops and presentations on customer focus, to develop measures for customer-focused service delivery.

It was planned that the additional feedback from the final workshop as to measures that the practitioners can use would be fed into a follow up paper written for consumption by the group in their day-to-day activities. The outcomes and activities would also feed into an academic paper, along with being reported in the weblog and at other presentations. A number of posts were made about the research in preparing for the presentation, along with one on the subject of the actual conference itself, entitled "Getting egged on"

In addition the researcher intended to follow the progress of the survey-responding authorities and see what further progress had been made by a

range of them. This was to be by a survey following the style of the initial one but with a rephrasing of questions to capture what effect the recording of National Indicator 14 (avoidable contact) had, along with any influence from employing citizen satisfaction or dissatisfaction as a guide, refining them with the most recent influences from the literature.

The draft survey was piloted with colleagues in two stages. Initially with one employed as Customer Service Manager, whose feedback about the phraseology and structure of questions was used to refine the survey, along with a final stage using a Web Manager. Certain publishers had already agreed to promote the questionnaire, so by emailing to a combination of the previous mailing list and responding users, and providing a main link from the weblog, along with promotion on the weblog, the survey was launched, in the hope that those contacted would link back to the web page hosting the survey. It had been discovered with the phase one survey that some authorities blocked Google and so the researcher employed a software application located on a server at the university and displaying a university URL (dmu.ac.uk), thus hoping to provide added credibility. The survey questions are presented in Annex 4.4. Survey 2009.

The researcher had established a mailing list of 400 recipients, which had been refined from the first phase. The second survey was emailed around the anniversary of the initial launch, and also that of the assassination of the true Great Emancipator.

Amongst those emailed was William Heath, founder and chairman of Kable Limited, a government ICT procurement advisory and consultancy body, along with being publisher and organizer of conferences. Mr Heath also publishes his own influential weblog and had involvement with a number of other companies seeking improvements in government services. As well as directing my

research to a colleague of his we also had a dialogue on methods of service improvement, and although differing in approaches, largely agreed.

Despite having waited an additional week there appeared to be large number of possible respondents on leave, it being a holiday period, and only 15 replied in the first week. To ensure continued publicity, requests for assistance were posted on a number of appropriate Internet forums including Public Sector Forums, the European Union epractice one and on the Improvement & Development Agency's own web Communities of Practice, within a number of the appropriate communities.

4.3.1. Review of phase 2 of the research

The survey received substantial promotion by Public Sector Forums in their newsletter, along with a section in the E-government Bulletin and responses came in through April and May. A reminder email was sent out in May, along with leafleting at various conferences including the European Conference on e-Government in London, where a paper on the research was also presented (Annex 10 – ECEG 2009 Paper Abstract). A further personalized email to a fresh list of possible respondents was sent out in July and in early August Public Sector Forums published a further reminder for their readers.

As a last reminder, and at the request of Public Sector Forums, an interim summary report was written and published on the weblog on 9th August 2009. Following on this, the 2009 survey was closed on the 1st September 2009 with the number of responses at 31. This is slightly less than the previous one but compares adequately.

Whilst both surveys had received less than statistically significant responses, this was compensated by getting the desired proportion of different types of local authorities. This was further compensated by the replies being from key stakeholders who would understand the business requirement for measuring multi-channel service delivery.

4.3.2. Data analysis of phase 2 of the research

The proportion of local authorities responding, as can be seen in Figure 4.7., is similar to that from 2008 with all types being covered, including one of the newly created unitary authorities.

Table 4.2 –Volume of responses to surveys by type of authority (2009)

Type of authority	No. of responses	No. of authorities in England	Percentage
County	5	27	19
London Borough	3	33	9
Met Borough	7	36	19
District	12	202	6
Unitary	2	55	4
Consultant	1		
Withheld	1		
Central govt	0		
Foreign	1		
Totals of valid responses	29	363	8

Figure 4.7 - Responses by type over base number of authorities (2009)

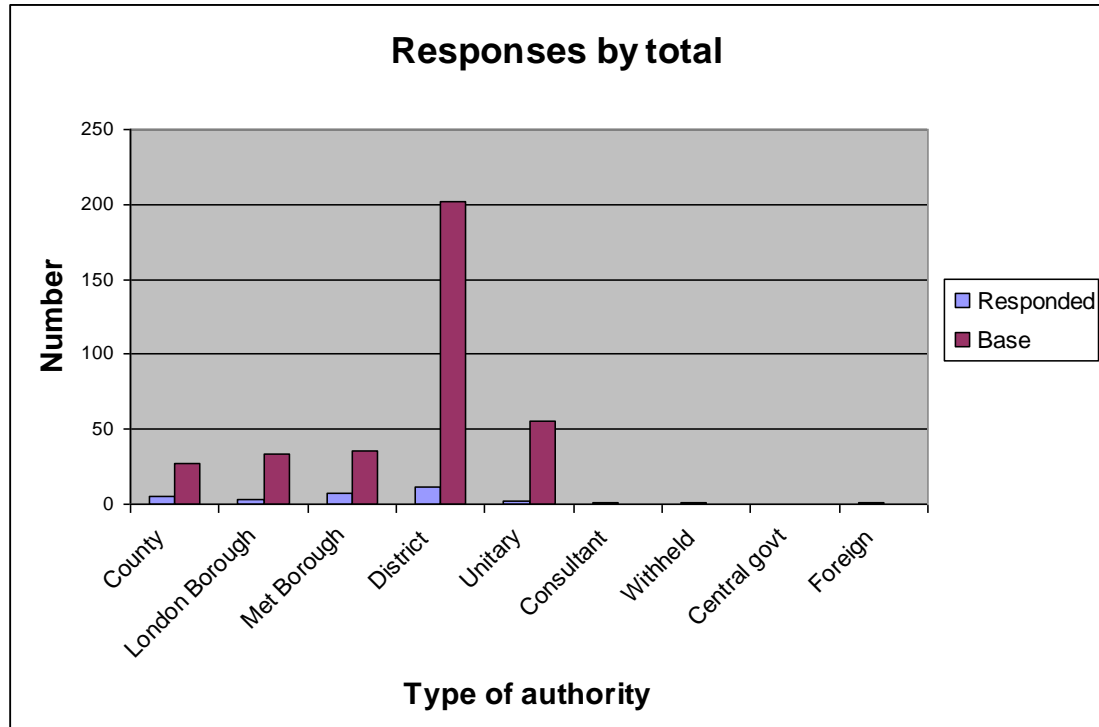
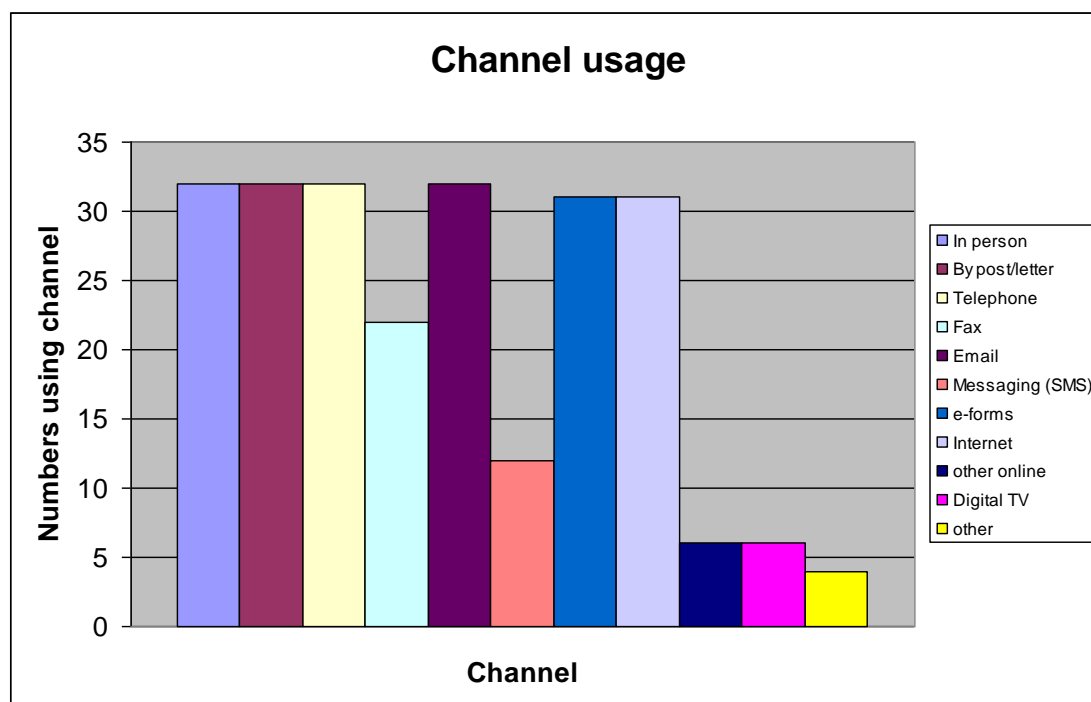
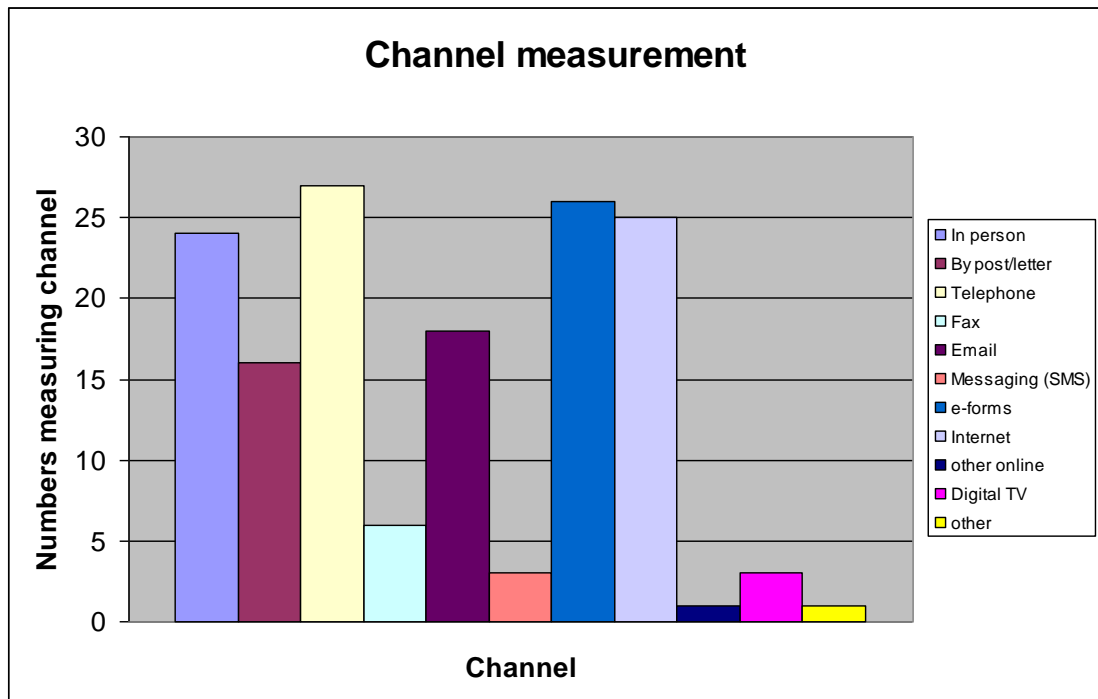


Figure 4.8 – Channels used (2009)



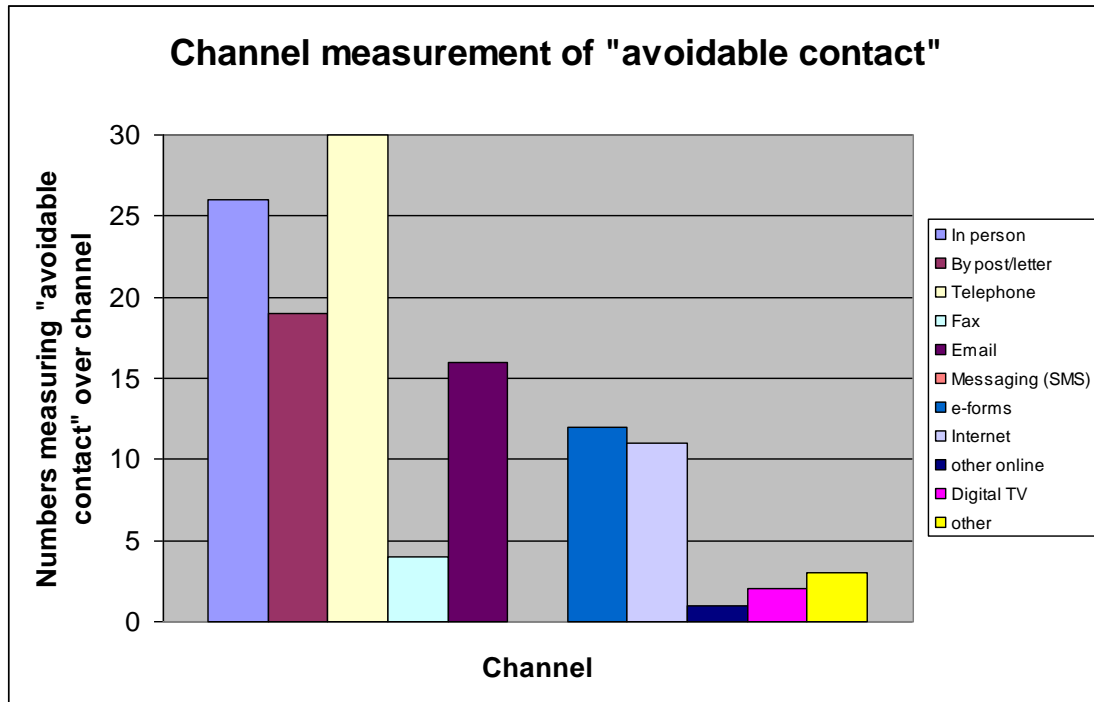
The core channels being used are reported as face-to-face, post, telephony and the Internet-based ones, with fax and SMS being minority ones, digital TV and any others are less employed.

Figure 4.9 – Channels measured (2009)



Despite almost 100% usage across six channels, measurement of their usage is variable, proving the practice is not consistent across all channels.

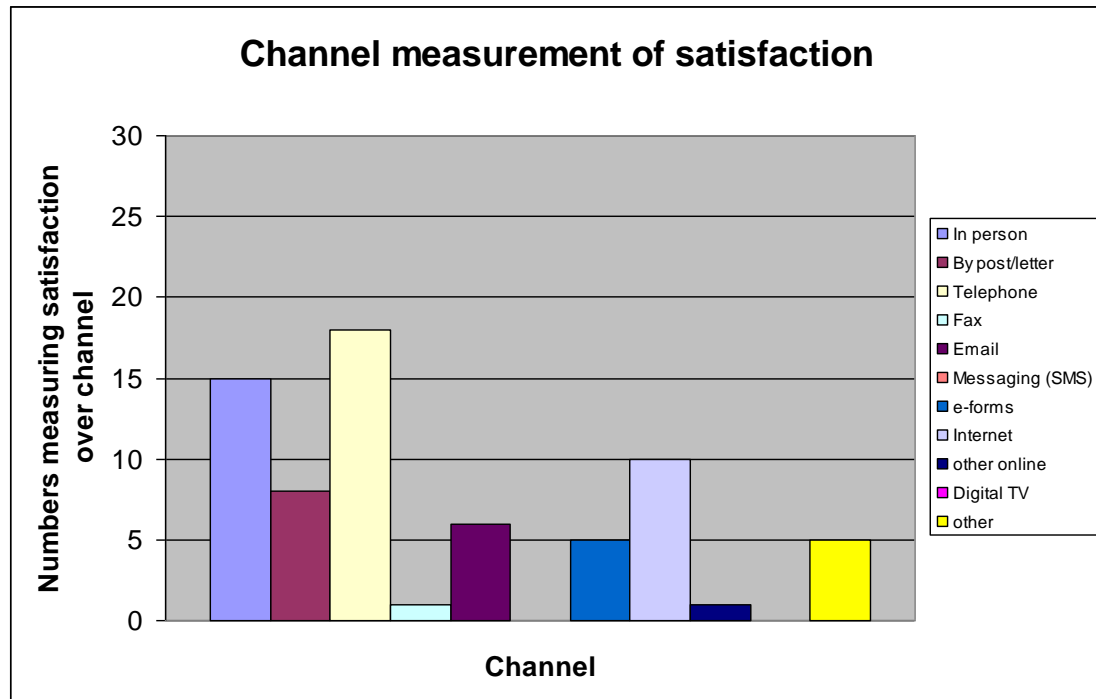
Figure 4.10 – 'Avoidable contact' measurement (2009)



With the instructions from Cabinet Office and others involved around the recording of National Indicator 14 being somewhat vague, it is of no surprise that the easiest channels have been chosen and which ones being recorded has been regularly inconsistent across respondents, as can be seen in Figure 4.10. However, the researcher was still concerned as to what the outcome of measuring the indicator might be (other than reporting back to government) and the responses to the related question are listed in Annex 8 – Responses to question about where the 'avoidable contact' (NI14) information is fed back in 2009 survey. These responses would indicate that little practical local benefit was likely to be made since in many cases no corporate plans had been made to employ the data. The councils involved were relying on services to implement changes, without a central authority ensuring that they happened. Councils were also measuring it over few channels and probably focusing on those that were easiest to measure.

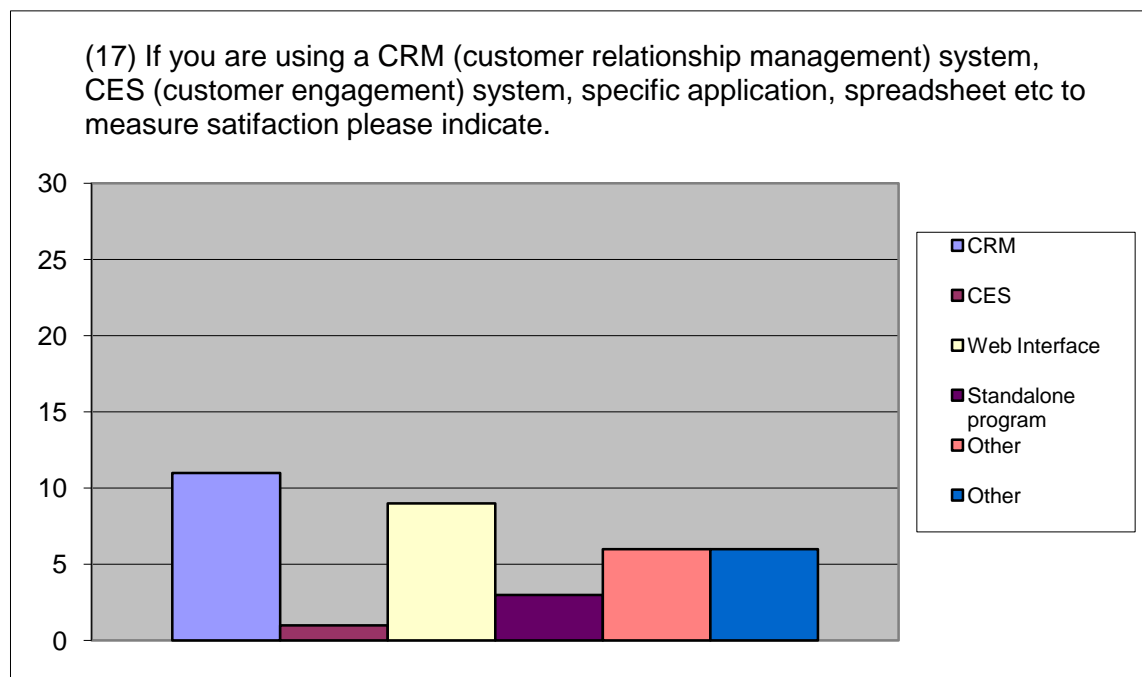
Measurement of satisfaction (Figure 4.11) is carried out by a number of authorities, and whilst still at a low level appears to be done across a range of channels, although still with some limitations and absences.

Figure 4.11 – Measurement of satisfaction (2009)



An important question developed from the 2008 questionnaire in relation to the refined third research question is 'To what extent the model and theory, described in Section 2.8. Key research questions, or parts of it are being employed, along with citizen satisfaction within a system of measurement?' This was to be observed by asking respondents 'If your organization is measuring satisfaction, what systems or mechanisms are you employing?'. The responses are summarised in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12 – Methods of measuring satisfaction (2009)

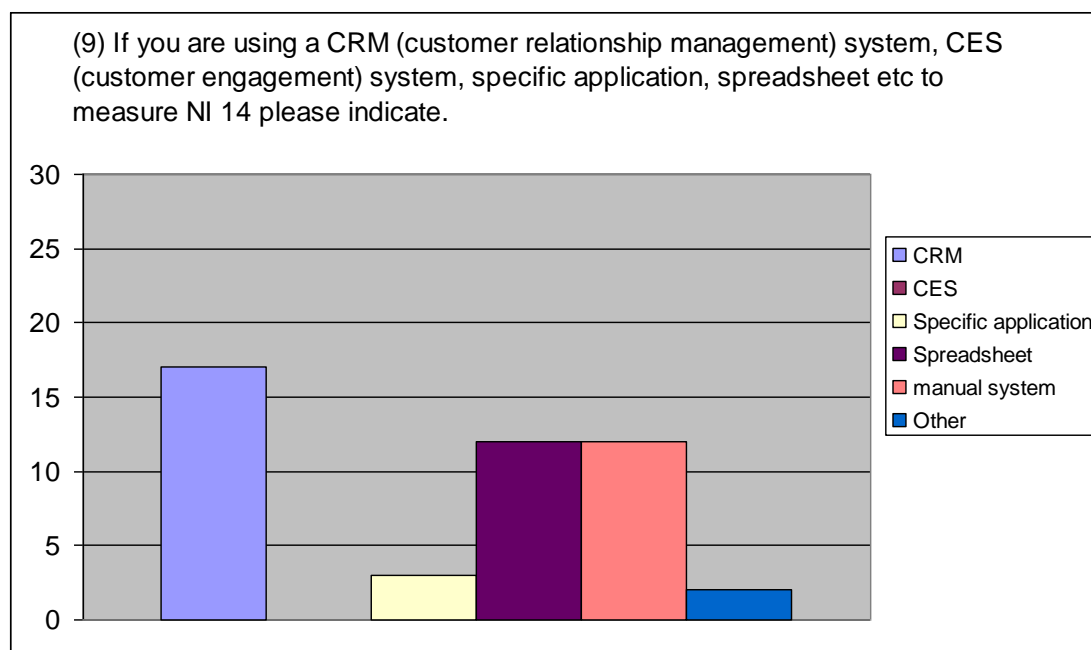


The responses might indicate a start in the automated measuring of citizen feedback, the qualitative data indicates that only three were using a product such as GovMetric and this appeared in the 'web interface' or 'other' category, it being available across multiple channels. Much of the other work was done by random sampling, annual surveys or collation from face to face contact. The one claim to have a Citizen Engagement System (CES) did not provide further detail. This limited adoption of 'citizen engagement' is taken forward into the interview questions in Section 4.6.2.4. Low level of usage recording.

In 2008 no councils in this sample, with the exception perhaps of a few pilot ones, knew enough about the new indicator, NI14, to decide how to measure it and so this had not been part of the 2008 survey. Instead, the opportunity was taken in 2009 to discover what mechanisms were in use to collect NI14. A majority were employing their Customer Relationship Management system in their call or contact centre to record transactions that passed through there, others employed a purely manual system in the contact centre or particular service areas, in certain circumstances both were employed. Some were still

developing their CRM or an in-house system to record the necessary data. The spread of systems is shown in Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13 – Methods of NI14 recording (2009)

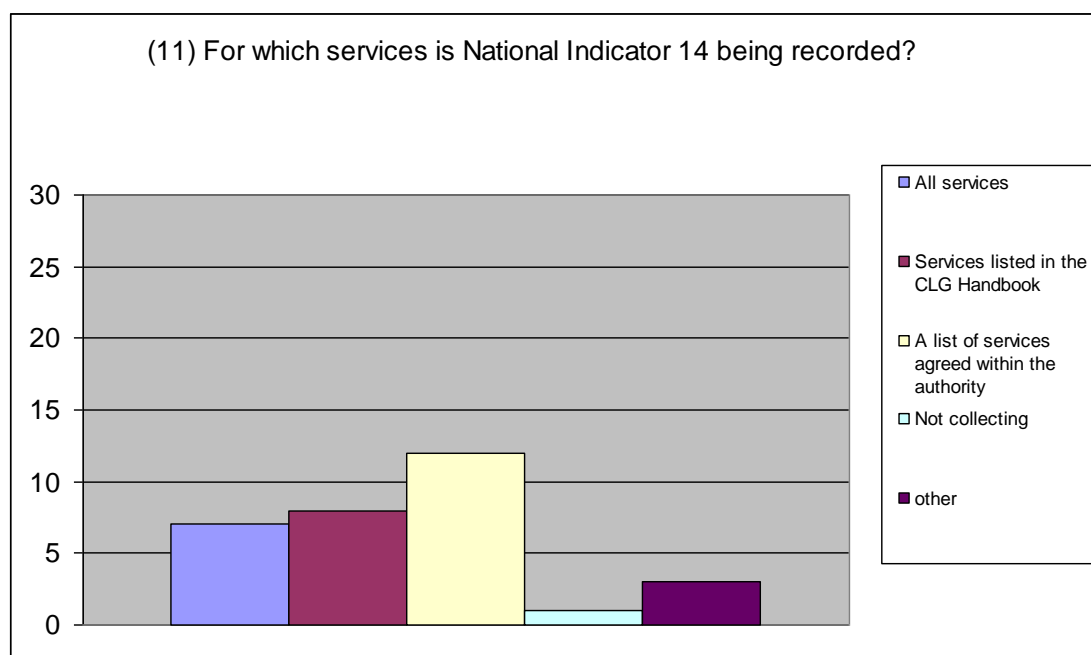


The majority of Councils responding had decided to record on a list of services agreed within the authority. The Cabinet Office guidance, in its three versions, had been confusing but had provided a list of services where NI14 should be measured and the final, more detailed, document from the Improvement & Development Agency and subsequent comments from the Cabinet Office had left the option to the authority involved, provided it had a rationale for what it was doing. The range of options taken by the respondents is demonstrated in Figure 4.14.

The key objective behind NI14 was to improve processes behind the services recorded, as described in Section 2.3.4. NI14, however a quarter of those completing the survey were not feeding the results back to the service areas and across the range of them vastly different approaches to handling the

resultant data were being taken from purely reporting to the Management Team, whilst others were employing the data in the service areas to actively monitor the back offices.

Figure 4.14 – NI14 services recorded (2009)



That the mandatory National Indicator 14 (NI14) was being treated so inconsistently and with relative disdain, as indicated by the limited channels and the varying number of services reported by some local authorities was no surprise from the manner of its inception, including the ‘woolly’ definition, as discussed in Section 2.3.4. NI14. Of the 32 replies in September 2009 24 stated that they were feeding back the results of NI14. However, the responses to a particular question on the topic provided the result that over 20% of respondent authorities, having recorded it, were not acting on it any further was surprising, given that substantial efforts have to be made to collect it and evidence its collection for government auditors. Even where claims were made that it was being referred back, these did not confirm productive usage, as the comments in Annex 8 – Responses to question about where the ‘avoidable contact’ (NI14) information is fed back in 2009 survey. demonstrate.

The limited number of channels it was being collected over perhaps indicated the half-hearted nature of the process and that what, even two revisions before implementation, was a technically difficult performance indicator to collect and record thoroughly, was not envisaged as being 'value for money'. In a similar way, the general lack of support shown for governments' use of performance indicators as seen in CHAPTER 1 – RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT, particularly as an outcome of NPM, as in Section 2.4.1. The effect of NPM may be starting to have an affect.

4.4. Comparison of phases 1 and 2

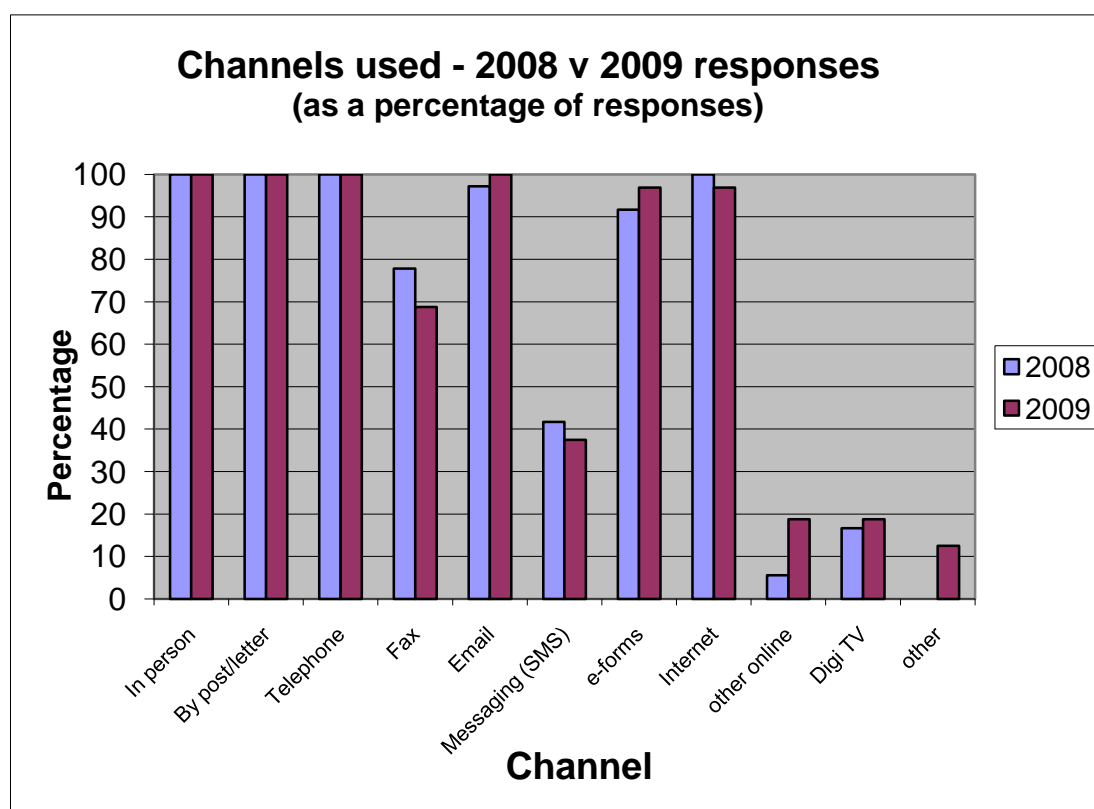
Table 4.3., following, compares the volumes of responses by type of authority in the two surveys.

Table 4.3 – Comparison of volume of responses to surveys by type of authority

	2008			2009		
Type of authority	No. of responses	No. of authorities in England	Percentage	No. of responses	No. of authorities in England	Percentage
County	2	34	6	5	27	19
London Borough	3	33	9	3	33	9
Met Borough	7	36	19	7	36	19
District	17	238	7	12	202	6
Unitary	3	46	7	2	55	4
Consultant	2			1		
Withheld	1			1		
Central govt	1			0		
Foreign	0			1		
Totals of valid responses	32	387	8	29	363	8

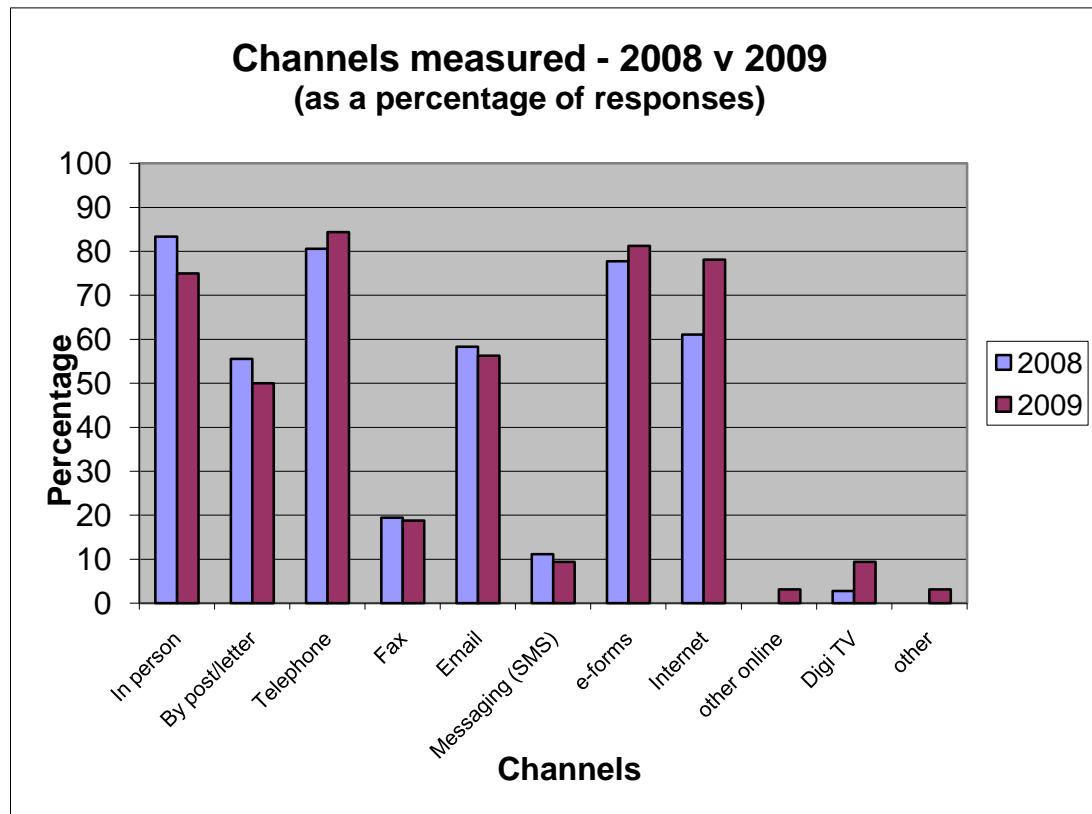
Channel usage by responding councils, demonstrated in Figure 4.8, remained largely consistent with 2008 (Figure 4.2.), with some slight increase in the use of electronic forms and email being indicated, whilst digital TV still remains something of a minority channel, although increases in the “other online” and “other” are indicated. A drop in the use of fax reflects its general reduction in use. A small drop in the use of SMS, which is the lowest used ‘major’ channel is probably as a result a different authorities responding, but is unlikely to be significant. The comparison can be seen in Figure 4.15.

Figure 4.15 – Channel usage 2008 v 2009 comparison



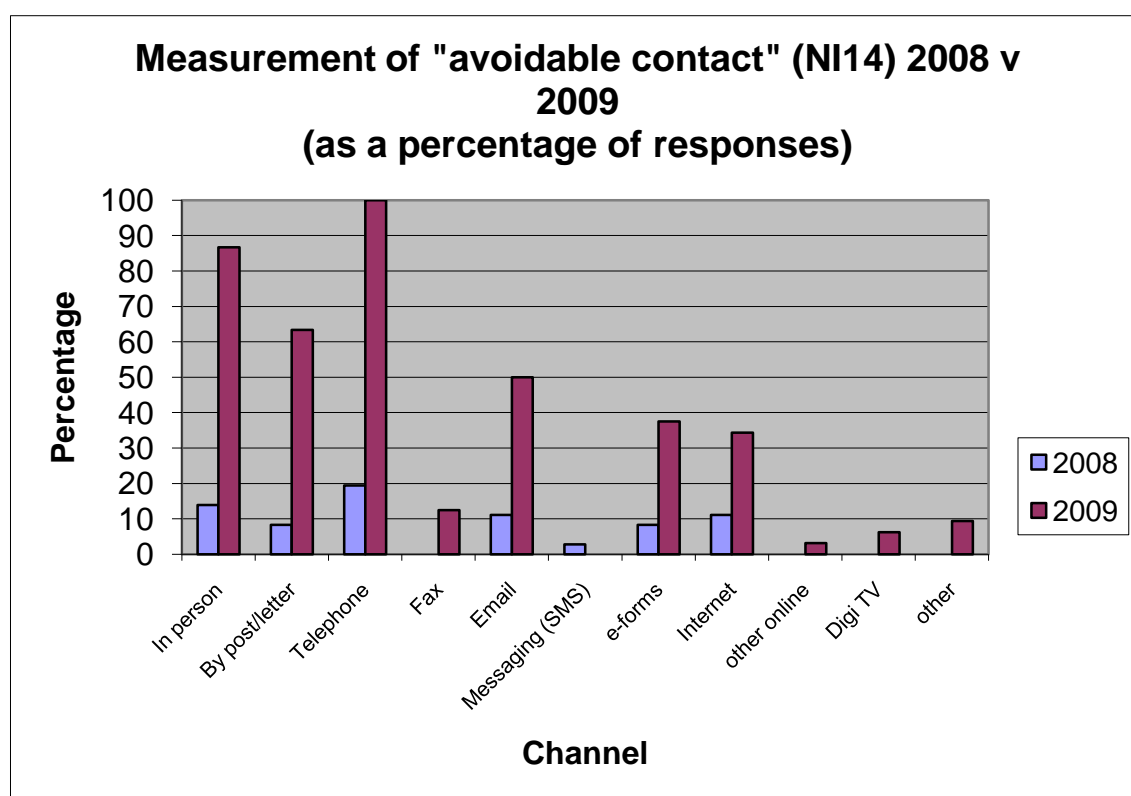
The number of Councils measuring the usage of the different possible channels, as indicated in Figure 4.9. has seen some change compared with the 2008 results shown in Figure 4.3., particularly in telephony and Internet, the comparison being shown in Figure 4.16. This is probably the result of having to make a return on National Indicator 14 (NI14) and the two channels stated are probably the easiest to record electronically. However the traditional channels of face-to-face and white-mail show a drop, again potentially as a result of difficulty in recording. Digital TV, whilst not a highly used channel demonstrates an increase in measurement.

Figure 4.16 – Channel measurement 2008 v 2009 comparison



An increase in measurement for some channels, such as the electronic ones, can be seen between Figure 4.4. for 2008 and the responses for 2009 in Figure 4.10. The necessity of responding to NI14 had had an effect on some channels, but, as stated, this focused on those which it is probably easiest to record, such as telephone and Internet, although this assumption may vary slightly from authority to authority, depending upon the technologies employed. However, there appears to be no consistent recording of all channels for purposes of identifying ‘avoidable contact’, with electronic forms and the Internet lagging behind, as can be seen by comparing Figures 4.9 and 4.10, which is done in Figure 4.17, below.

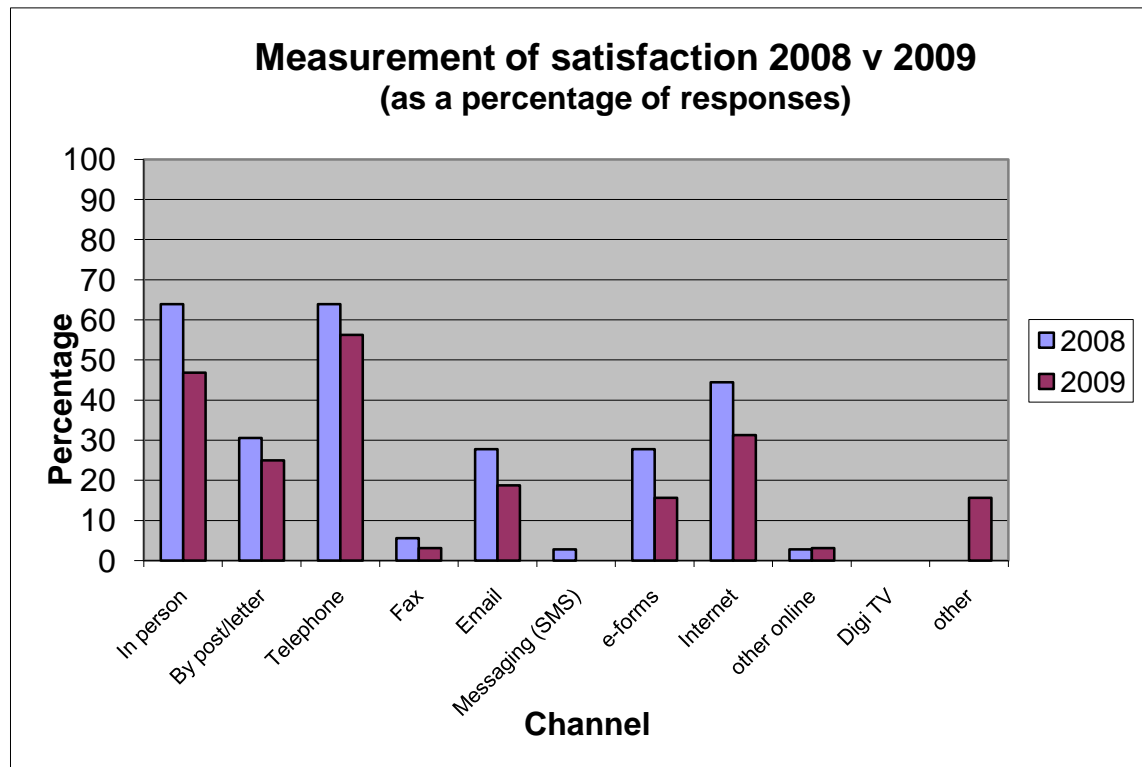
Figure 4.17 – Channel measurement of “avoidable contact” (NI 14) 2008 v 2009 comparison



The measurement of satisfaction in 2009, Figure 4.11, compared with that from 2008, Figure 4.5, is largely in alignment, as graphically compared in Figure 4.18. The difference with ‘other’ being reported was from the use of surveys by services. However, the majority of respondents claimed to be measuring satisfaction or dissatisfaction for at least some channels, which would be a good practice if carried out consistently across all available channels.

The apparent drop in recording satisfaction displayed in Figure 4.18 may be partially a result of a differing group of authorities, but there may also be the possibility that a number have focused on National Indicator 14 to the detriment of satisfaction.

Figure 4.18 – Channel measurement of satisfaction 2008 v 2009 comparison



4.4.1. Questions from phases 1 and 2 to be employed in phase 3

One can see from Figure 4.16 that there is no consistency in recording the usage of different channels of service delivery to provide baseline measures to assist in improving their usage or uptake. A useful question would be to confirm whether this is so and if there is any likelihood of change to recording all channels. Similarly it would be relevant to this research to know whether there is any usage, current or planned, of applications to measure citizen satisfaction across all channels. In relation to NI14, there has been a general failure to measure this across all available channels and for a consistent list of services and a deeper understanding of this might inform future use of performance indicators.

In terms of the original research questions, developed from the aims, outlined in Section 1.1. Introduction, and refined from examination of the literature in CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW and responses to the first questionnaire, these were:

- What systems of measurement, including government required ones, are being employed?
- If, and how well, systems of measurement are guiding multi-channel service delivery?
- Whether the model and theory proposed, or parts of it are being employed, along with citizen satisfaction within a system of measurement?
-

4.5. The ongoing weblog

Another research instrument is the weblog²⁵. The weblog might be seen as a 'golden thread' of continuity throughout the main phases of the research, from its establishment towards the end of the initial literature review, to being a promotional tool for the research, promoting best practice from the academic and practitioner literature, along with being the host of both of the questionnaires, and with drawing comments back from practitioners on topics related to e-government and metrics, as listed in Annex 12 – Weblog post analysis.

²⁵ There being little apparent investigation into the use of social media as an academic research instrument, the researcher developed a paper outlining the limited literature and his own experience of the benefits and downsides. The paper entitled "Employing Social Media as a Tool in Information Systems Research" was presented at the ETHICOMP 2010 during April 2010 and was well received, especially when the audience were made aware that a mix of tools were being employed over an extended time period to triangulate the empirical data. The abstract is available at Annex 11 – Ethicomp 2010 Paper Abstract.

As discussed in Section 3.4. Methods deployed and developed, there was limited literature around the use of weblogs as research instruments, much of the literature found describing their use in general or as research diaries. However, there was sufficient to encourage the inclusion of the weblog within the 'toolbox' of research instruments being employed, if not serving as toolbox itself, the weblog acting as the repository for the questionnaires, feedback to the questionnaires, ethical information and information about feedback sessions that were to occur or had already taken place. Thus the weblog was able to shape the opportunity for thinking about the proposed model, matters around metrics and e-government in general, without directing responses to the questionnaires or interviews.

Establishing the weblog using standard tools available from Wordpress was relatively easy, but Wordpress was not the initial base, Blogger, the Google tool, was attempted first but found not to be as suitable for the purpose, so it was left static pointing to the Wordpress one. As with any tool, practice made use easier and the main thing was then to provide interesting content. Sources of material came from reading a range of publications but setting up an automated daily Google newsfeed search for anything e-government-related brought up content both for the weblog and the research. The researcher, having an IT background and being responsible for a number of official websites, had some experience in the technology but had not constructed a weblog prior to starting the research. Thus the implementation required some time to be spent considering the design options and developing a site structure that would best deliver a relatively attractive but easy to maintain tool for research. There was also the need to think in advance with regards to providing access to the future questionnaires and other documents. The graphical foundations were established following some experimentation with images obtained from the Internet, but having already chosen a title of the "Great E-mancipator" for the research theme did assist with choosing the focus and styling.

Although practice with posting and managing the weblog, along with occasional changes to layout became easier with practice, there was still a certain amount of time required from extracting, writing and establishing well-linked weblogs. After a while it became apparent that averaging ten posts per month maintained an active number of visitors, it also became clear that around two hours were employed drafting, finalising and laying out each weblog entry. In some cases it was possible to extract information from the draft dissertation towards the weblog, whilst other entries became content of the dissertation following posting on the weblog, when their value was realised. Consideration was made of carrying out content analysis²⁶ on both the postings to the weblog and the responses. However, unlike the situations described by Weare & Lin (2000) when carrying out content analysis on the World Wide Web, this was to be on a single website (weblog) with a limited number of additional contributors, so conventional content analysis would be unlikely deliver insights. Instead, taking a lead from Mayring (2000), it was decided to label each weblog post with one or more categories, in a similar manner to his (2000, p.5) description of “deductive category application”, thus providing a link back to the original research questions without machine analysis of the text, which given a single author and a limited number of posts would lack value.

The weblog was also a launch pad for the surveys, enabling the ethical preamble to be read, with supporting materials, and then be reached by those wanting to complete it. This follows the advice of Denscombe (2005, p.8) who states that:

“research project Home Pages offer a voluntary, self-initiated means for dealing with the requirements of research ethics. They provide an eminently practical tool for ‘self-governance’ that addresses a public audience of a) potential participants, b) actual participants, c) other researchers.”

²⁶ Content analysis is described by Elo & Kyngas (2007, p.108) following Krippendorff (1980) as “a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena”.

In addition, the weblog was convenient when encouraging responses, since each posting was used to promote the survey, in the case of the second survey, along with later posts reporting initial feedback and thus prompting additional responses.

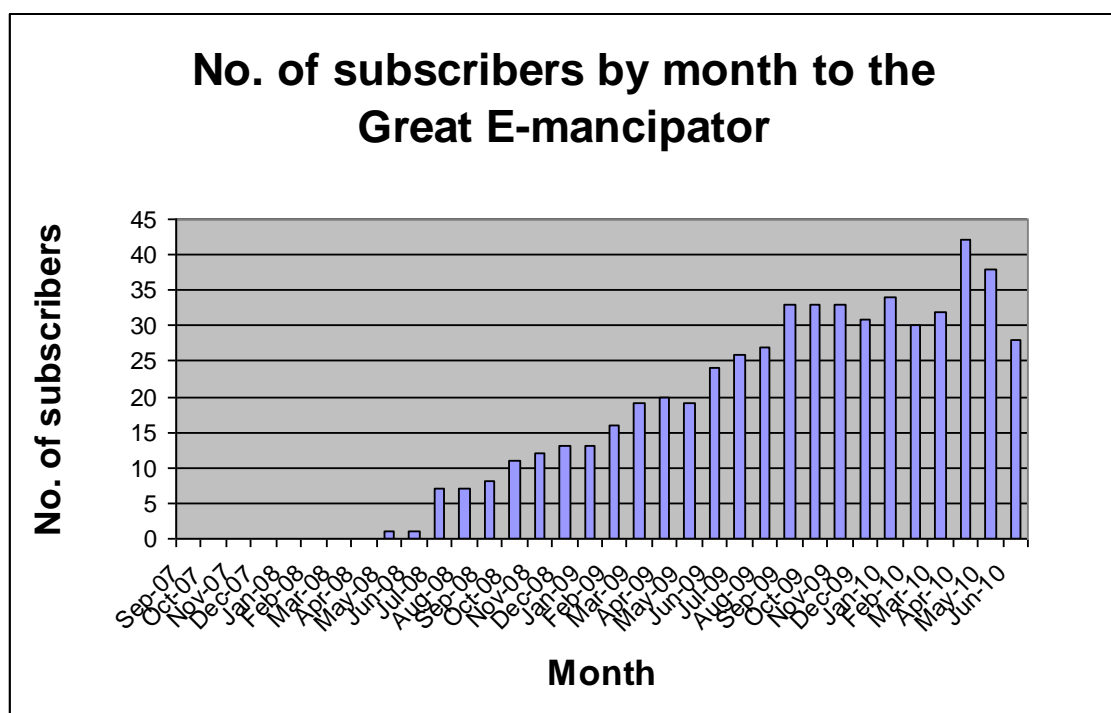
As described earlier, in September 2008, the online version of the Municipal Journal, **www.localgov.co.uk**, had taken the weblog as an automatic RSS feed into their own list of bloggers, which included a range of known commentators and a Member of Parliament. The researcher was then asked for an interview by the same web site to be included in their special regular section on citizen engagement, which commenced in April 2009, with links back to the weblog.

In November 2008 a list of software suppliers dealing with approaches to National Indicator 14, along with customer satisfaction solutions, was established and became a PDF file download from the site, being regularly maintained as feedback was received from suppliers. The list had twelve suppliers on by November 2009 assisting and guiding any authorities looking for potential companies to deliver a suitable Citizen Engagement System or supplier for a NI14 application. The feedback from some suppliers is recorded in Annex 6 – Communications with software developers. This list indicated, in line with one of the research questions from Section 2.8. Key research questions, that whilst the model in its exact form was not yet being delivered within the government market, that the tools to do so existed. Having available such information would have assisted suppliers to comprehend the local authority market, as well as guiding local authorities, as was exemplified by a comment from one supplier “This is a really useful viewpoint for me to get my head round. Thanks for this. I will circulate it around our senior management too”.

The weblog homepage was updated on a regular basis and further links added, along with the ability to subscribe being used by a slowly increasing audience, as can be seen in Figure 4.7., including the **www.localgov.co.uk** who

employed it to link the RSS feed. Although comments were few²⁷, they were largely drawn from local government colleagues agreeing with the posts and wanting deeper insight, or from consultants, also in agreement.

Figure 4.19 – Subscribers to the Great E-mancipator weblog



High points for visitors tended to be when publishing major documents on National Indicator 14 released by the Improvement & Development Agency or Cabinet Office. These were picked up by journalists at Public Sector Forums who credited me with the information.

The weblog had been consistently monitoring news around NI14 and announcing the latest government papers about it as they appeared. Establishing a role as a “critical friend” of metrics had attracted a small, regular

²⁷ In their analysis of intellectual and social capital, Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998) indicate why comments on weblogs and similarly wikis aren’t always forthcoming, since such expectations of capital investment by others require substantial cultivation and then maintenance.

audience of practitioners, academics and consultants with an interest in the field. Whilst not discovering any direct answers to the research questions posed in Section 2.8. Key research questions, it did draw out the limited range of solutions on the market to recording both satisfaction and NI14. The comments placed upon the weblog also confirmed that the researcher was correct in trying to determine a common and composite metric for use across multiple channels and services, along with the general difficulties presented by channel shift and costing, when channels are seen in isolation. Typical, related comments to postings on the weblog can be seen in May 2008, where a respondent stated “My particular interest at the moment is to understand actual examples of how successful (or otherwise!) channel migration has been. I am particularly interested in migration from telephone to the web”. Similarly in July 2009 a comment against a posting on the weblog included the statement:

“Even if it is fairly obvious that web is cheaper per transaction than phone which in turn is cheaper than face-to-face, I would still offer one caveat; the simplest less-interactive transactions such as yearly re-registering of my car can and do take place on the web. Its the more difficult edge cases ; (such as my stolen car) or similar that require more interaction and thus take place over the phone or face-to-face. Thus the type of transaction and complexity of the transaction may also impact the cost per transaction over different mediums.”

Thus, feedback via the weblog itself, can be seen to be providing additional direction to the discussion around the complexity of managing channels and channel shift presented in Section 2.3.8. Cost of service delivery.

A list of posts to the weblog. by date, along with comments appropriate to the research, are provided at Annex 12 – Weblog post analysis. The list also provides a breakdown of each post by the categories allocated to the post, e.g. citizen, customer satisfaction, NI14, demonstrating the diversity of topics covered whilst maintaining consistency within the research subject. From September 2007 until June 2010 the weblog received over 21,000 visits, which, whilst a limited number for a commercial web site, will be good coverage in terms of academic research instruments, perhaps indicating the value of such

tools. Whilst WordPress made available such daily site statistics as number of visitors, there was also information on top posts, search engine terms used to find the site, referring sites and links clicked on, but this latter data was initially accessible to the researcher as a summary of only the previous week (but it did change much later on). So that although the figures may have been of interest on an annual basis, this was not possible at the time, without extensive additional recording work. However, the researcher has examined the summary statistics more recently made available and these indicate the following:

- That the most visited pages (other than the home page) being some 9% of the total, were those related to National Indicator 14
- The most popular search topics leading to the site were around the subject of NI14, at nearly 40%
- The employment of the search terms 'measure' and 'metric' brought 5% of visitors
- Just less than 2% of visitors used 'egovernment' or 'e-government' as a search term to find the site
- 2% of visitors looked directly at the link to the 'Model' from the homepage
- The main downloads from the site were definitions of or upgrades to NI14
- After NI14, the annual surveys were most downloaded (75 and 73 times each)
- The latest version of the supplier table was downloaded 25 times, whilst the original had 27 downloads
- Where visitors had been directed from another site, the major one was the Improvement & Development Agency's Community of Practice one, where the researcher frequently commented.

These figures would indicate a majority interest around NI14 but less focus (from a search engine point-of-view) on measurement or e-government. Many

visitors had found the site by the use of search engines, especially the many national versions of Google. However, without the physical intervention of the researcher handing out promotional material or posting on other web sites, it is believed the numbers would have been much lower.

Originally it had been anticipated that the weblog would be restricted to focusing upon service delivery measurement, but it was found that this subject alone was unlikely to maintain the interest of the wide audience desired, instead it was expanded to include a slightly broader subject matter that was expected to attract the wider readership desired for feedback and questionnaire completion. As a result, weblog topics were written covering the spectrum of side issues impinging upon the measurement of service delivery; these are also identified within the dissertation and include channel migration, customer versus citizen and e-democracy.

According to Krippendorff (1980) when carrying out content analysis, there are three procedures involved. Although full content analysis was not appropriate, as earlier described, the first of Krippendorff's (1980) procedures defining a population, is already limited to the weblog and responses, similarly with the second, the unit of analysis, can be established as the posts and responses. The third and most important is the categorization scheme which is dealt with by tagging the posts with a category that emphasises the importance of the message components. The weblog postings were categorized on an ongoing basis, with multiple categories being possible, and unsurprisingly 'e-government' received the highest score, whilst 'social media', the up and coming e-government category, was covered only sixteen times as is identified in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 – Weblog categories referenced

Category	Referenced
E-government	236

Customer satisfaction	193
Engagement	168
Metrics	167
Transformational change	140
Citizen	134
Systems thinking	69
NI14	61
Social media	16
Uncategorized	5

The uncategorized label was employed for more general posts such as when the researcher was stuck in Spain due to the Icelandic volcano with limited Internet access.

As a way of identifying if there was a change in category focus during the period of the research, the categories employed were aligned against the year of publication.

Table 4.5 – Category postings by year (%age of total)

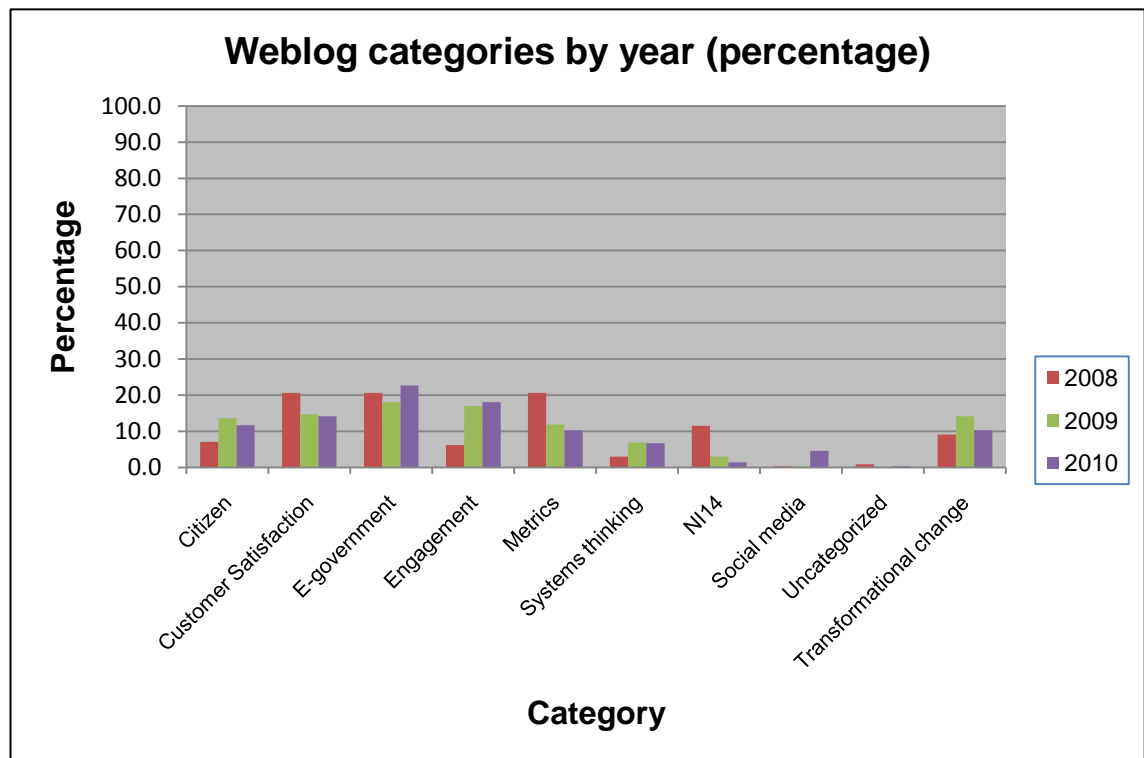
Category	Referenced ²⁸		
	2008	2009	2010
E-government	21	18	23
Customer satisfaction	21	15	14
Engagement	6	17	18
Metrics	21	12	10
Transformational change	9	14	10
Citizen	7	14	12
Systems thinking	3	7	7
NI14	12	3	1
Social media	0	0	5
Uncategorized	1	0	0

In attempt to rationalise them, the figures were treated as a percentage of each year's total categories, as presented in Figure 4.20. Whilst these do demonstrate some reduction in the use of the 'metric' category over the period,

²⁸ Having only three posts in total the year 2007 was left out for this analysis

along with the natural decline in NI14 (as it was mandated, then withdrawn), the associated categories of ‘customer satisfaction’, ‘e-government’ and ‘engagement’ were maintained consistently through the period observed.

Figure 4.20 – Weblog categories by year (percentage)



Where comments to posts were received, these have been summarised by category in Table 4.6. Demonstrating that whilst measurement, possibly relating best to the Citizen Engagement Management systems category, only received three responses, efficiency & savings and channel migration, less directly related to the headline category, attracted most responses. The aforementioned categories remain fundamental to the research, ultimately being implicit within the intention for the employment of e-government. However, given the limited responses across a range categories, the researcher believed that detailed content analysis would have limited benefits to the research.

Table 4.6 – Weblog topics responded to

Topic	No. of responses
Efficiency & savings	13
Channel migration	9
General topics	9
Data reuse	5
E-democracy	5
CEM systems	3
Satisfaction	3
Customer/citizen	2
Public service ethic	1

Twelve responses to comments were from the researcher, which are not included in the figures in Table 4.6. This is an essential part of the action research feedback loop which is developed, where propositions are declared, responded to by those in the field, then receiving a reply from the researcher (where necessary) to confirm or disagree. In September 2008, a respondent to a post entitled “So, what’s the vision? – Employing experience”, which was an outline of the model being employed, along with supporting information from Merholz (2008). The respondent, from the private sector, agreed with what was said apart from the use of Merholz’s qualities, these were then later refined as part of the ‘expectations’ work in the research. Similarly in April 2009, a subscriber to the weblog from Socitm posted the following in response to a much earlier question by a respondent on the topic of ‘channel migration’:

“In response to David Rees’s point, Roger Abbott from South Tyneside presented material at Socitm Insight’s recent Learning from Better connected event (see <http://www.socitm.gov.uk/socitm/Events/Learning+from+Better+connected+2009+conference.htm>) with an excellent example of this sort of migration within waste and recycling. The council used information from Govmetric and the Socitm Website take up service to identify why people weren’t doing more online in this service area, and then they devised e-campaigns to encourage them to do so. Their stats show that monthly calls on this topic have fallen from 2920 in April 08 to 1946 in April 2009. Percentage wise the difference is 81/19 phone to web in April 08 and 33/67 phone to web in April 08 (the overall number of enquiries has gone up, from 3589 to 5969 – but that’s a good thing, when you consider more people are being served by the

councils and the marginal cost of the additional web enquiries is virtually zero.”

Whilst the named council would appear to be only measuring the telephone and web channels, suitably improving their approach to delivery via the web site had seen a sharp drop in the telephone calls received on the same matters. This weblog reply demonstrating the potential value of responding to feedback and employing measurement on just two channels and clearly provides a positive response to the first two research questions and demonstrating partial usage of the model. However, the comment about costs displays the simplistic view of channel costing discussed in Section 2.3.8. Cost of service delivery, which needs to be taken account of in any business case, when moving services around channels, although it is agreed that the action obviously reduced the number of incoming calls, however this might be demonstrated as a saving. As a respondent to the weblog in April 2010 stated, “it is time to examine the impact of technology, as it is, not through the lenses of our optimism”. So that the original research questions, developed from the aims, outlined in Section 1.1. Introduction, and refined from examination of the literature in CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW and responses to the first questionnaire, remain as:

- What systems of measurement, including government required ones, are being employed?
- If, and how well, systems of measurement are guiding multi-channel service delivery?
- Whether the model and theory proposed, or parts of it are being employed, along with citizen satisfaction within a system of measurement?

The responses to the first two phases of the research, along with feedback to the ongoing weblog, indicate a general absence of a solution across **all** channels for measuring service delivery usage and quality to direct improvement. As a result, three questions, in particular, arise from an analysis of the responses to the questionnaire and weblog data, these are:

- Whilst at least eight channels are regularly reported to be used, there is still a low level of usage recording – why?
- Multi-channel recording or customer engagement systems are common in the private sector, why not in the public sector?
- According to the surveys there hasn't been a systematic use of cross-channel recording for avoidable contact (NI14) – why not?

4.6. Phase 3 of the research

Phase 3 of the research was planned as a series of interviews with key personnel who have played a role in the establishment, use and receipt of electronic government across the UK. The interviews were planned in accordance with the methodology outlined by Burn & Robins (2003, p.29) in their study of e-government and organizational change. The interviews were audio recorded and all interviewees were:

- Given an explanation of the nature and objectives of the study
- Informed of expectations of involvement outlined, including confidentiality
- Questioned using the standard case study protocol where responses are solicited in a semi structured manner

The pilot phase was carried out in December 2009 using seven questions, with nine subsidiary ones, making a total of sixteen, expected to produce an interview of some ten minutes²⁹. This process was following the methodology outlined in Section 3.3. Research process The researcher had procured a stereo digital recorder, along with an adaptor to enable telephone interviews to be recorded. The first two interviews were done face-to-face to ensure the quality of the questions. The researcher was able to watch for body-language and recognise verbal feedback from the interviewees to ensure comprehension of the language used in the interview questions. The interviews were successful and only a few minor adjustments were made to the questions to ensure that

²⁹ In reality, the interviews varied from 7 to 27 minutes, averaging out at 18 minutes across the eight

they were more likely to be understood when delivered over the telephone. The covering letter, sent to all interviewees beforehand, explaining the ethical standing of the research and requesting permissions is at Annex 4.6. Interview ethical approval 2010.

The researcher also attempted to employ voice recognition software (Nuance Dragon Naturally Speaking) to assist with the transcription of the interviews. Unfortunately whilst the interviewer's voice was recognised by the software to some extent, those of the interviewees were less clear and with an absence of commands to break up the text, the result was largely garbled. The researcher then resorted to the traditional method of manually transcribing the text from the audio files uploaded to a computer.

To establish whether telephone interviews would also work with the equipment two pilot interviews were arranged. These also worked and the questions were delivered and answered to the satisfaction of both parties.

4.6.1. Rationale and preparation for the phase 3 interviews

The questions used drew on the feedback resulting from the surveys in 2008 and 2009 and listed in Section 4.4.1. Questions from phases 1 and 2 to be employed in phase 3.

Although most respondents to phase 1 and 2 had offered their services for further research, it was decided that along with some of those who had completed the survey, some deeper understanding might be gained by approaching a number of senior managers in local government ICT for the interview questions. With their greater experience, and having been deeply involved in e-government for some years, they were thought able to provide

more in-depth insights to the study, particularly being from authorities where initiatives in modern service delivery were taking place.

Considering the range of councils involved it was decided to choose three from District Councils, which were the greater proportion, and one each from a Unitary, London Borough, County and Metropolitan Borough, along with a senior person from central government to provide the central view as listed in Table 4.7. Since all local authorities in England had been expected to provide electronic delivery of 100% of those services capable of it, this meant that from the small to the large the experience would be similar in requirement, only possibly differing in scale and whether public or private sector partnerships had been chosen to assist. Given the small number of authorities, along with a wish to respect anonymity, the researcher has shown constraint in reporting explicit links to projects that might identify them.

Table 4.7 – Choice of interviewees by authority

Authority or respondent type	Number chosen in proportion	Number in UK (where appropriate)
County	1	27
London Borough	1	33
Met Borough	1	36
District	3	202
Unitary	1	55
Consultant		
Withheld		
Central govt	1	
Foreign		
	8	353

To avoid issues of being turned down repeatedly as a possible “cold caller”, it was decided to contact senior figures, those with the title manager or Chief Information Officer (CIO), working in government that the researcher knew reasonably well and might be prepared to participate in the research, whilst not

necessarily carrying any bias. As a member of the Local Services Chief Information Officer Council (LCIOC) in the UK, along with the regional executive of Socitm, the researcher had access to a number of individuals who he could be confident would be forthcoming with their views, as a result of their working experiences, whilst not possessing any obvious or stated alliances with particular suppliers or political groupings. The alternative of approaching those in such roles who were not known to the researcher as a “cold caller” could reasonably have been expected to repeat the experience of Howley (2007, p.133) who even after trying to gain responses from Local Authority (LAs) ICT Managers observed that “The difficulty experienced in persuading LAs to participate in [...] research cannot be overstated”. Thus, if a more randomized approach had been attempted it is highly likely that, even after disproportionate effort, very few responses would have been received and in that case probably only from those carrying particular biases that they found the need to vent. The benefits of being a practitioner with a wide network of colleagues in this field of research and thus able to gain access to them for interview were thus leveraged to also improve the representative nature of this phase of the research. A second list of possible respondents was drawn up in case the first group were unable to assist or be contacted in the allotted time period, but was not required.

When initially contacting the four most senior individuals, those having the title CIO, the researcher emailed them using the university email system and address. The central government contact had been emailed to a personal address, whilst the local government managers had been contacted using their work email addresses. The central government contact made arrangement for the researcher to book an interview through his office and informed his personal assistant. Some six days later there had been no response from the local government managers.

Bearing in mind that the researcher was known to the individuals concerned, the presumption was made that the email address was causing an issue and the email was repeated to the three using a work email address. Responses and appointments were resulting with all three, although in one instance there was a month wait for an appointment. The researcher suspects the slightly impersonal email address may have resulted in the communication being halted by a spam filter, or possibly but less likely that the .gov.uk email address was seen as acceptable traffic by a “white list”. The experience of these initial difficulties further suggests that the judgement to approach known contacts was correct.

The interviewees’ titles, type of authority and the method and date of interview are listed below in Table 4.8. This demonstrates the range of authorities, along with the seniority of the figures being interviewed. It had been hoped to interview more face-to-face but the winter weather prevented an arranged meeting.

Table 4.8 – Interviewees by role, title and interview details

Interview	Authority Type	Role	Method	Date
1	District Council	Customer Services Manager	Face-to-face	9 December 2009
2	District Council	Web Manager	Face-to-face	9 December 2009
3	District Council	ICT Manager	Telephone	15 December 2009
4	Unitary Council	ICT Manager	Telephone	23 December 2009
5	London Borough	CIO	Telephone	8 February 2010
6	County Council	CIO & Strategic Director	Telephone	10 February 2010
7	Central Government	CIO	Telephone	17 February 2010
8	Metropolitan Borough	CIO	Telephone	2 March 2010

This also shows the spread of time required to gain access to very busy people, which also provided additional time to start the transcription and analysis work.

4.6.2. Analysis of phase 3 of the research

From the eight interviews the feedback by core question has been analysed, as presented below, the core questions being listed in Annex 4.5. Interview questions 2010. The interviews were transcribed from the audio, then cross-tabulated to facilitate more detailed study of responses, on a question by question basis. The questions follow on from those identified through the literature in Section 2.8. Key research questions, along with the further refined questions resulting from the latter phases of the research in Section 4.4.1. Questions from phases 1 and 2 to be employed in phase 3.

4.6.2.1. Issues resulting from electronic government implementation

Seven of the eight interviewees agreed that issues had arisen in the period. The eighth subject had not previously worked in local government and had also been out of the country, although she had been previously employed in a customer service role within a number of Housing Associations and hence was closely aware of serving citizens.

Key issues raised were that there had not been enough centralisation, which with a lack of standardisation, had resulted in multiple and differing approaches to what were essentially the same services or applications. The “e-government programme” had led to the putting in place of improved ICT infrastructure but there had been no transformational business change to deliver the necessary efficiency savings, which was described by one interviewee as the “Fallacy of E-government”. The approach had been to put all services online without focus on the services that would be most beneficial for citizen and government.

Importantly, it was stated that it may have been premature and that the environment for the citizen wasn’t ready at that time, between the years 2000 and 2005, without enough potential users, the availability of broadband, or citizens with sufficient and real experience of dealing with e-commerce.

Much of the above being confirmed in the literature examined in CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW.

It was pointed out that there were also legislative or constitutional issues and the community representatives (councillors etc) didn’t appear to have been involved at the outset, leaving a gap in terms of preparing the communities for e-government.

On the positive side it was proposed that “we were in the right place now” and that the process did raise awareness of what is and what is not possible. It was also acknowledged that it wasn’t about “online” but about process change, along with an understanding of the need to be able to transfer costs of channel delivery back to the services, the process change paying for the electronic delivery. Whilst there was limited success in e-government terms, relationships were built during the period that were coming to fruition now, that might facilitate real change, in some places.

It was a similar appreciation of the roll-out of e-government that had encouraged this research, as can be seen in Section 1.2. Motivation. Further, it was in the hope of revealing the broader experience, and any learning, and feeding it back into the practitioner community, which had provided the research approach, as outlined in Section 3.2. Research approach or strategy. The responses also reinforce the partially rhetorical questions posed in Section 2.8. Key research questions with regards to how the e-government programme might have been, and may still be, improved.

4.6.2.2. Rate of take-up of electronic services by the public

In order to consider how metrics might exist, some understanding of how e-government was believed to have progressed was required. This was done by inquiring whether the take-up had been “low, moderate or high” and what was meant by the terms, if the response was in those terms.

Five of the eight interviewees were quite clear that rate of take-up had been relatively low, two acceded to ‘moderate’ considering government as a whole, whilst the central government subject considered it to have been high. The

measure was, in general, an approximate comparative one with volumes across the different channels.

As to the definition of the rate of take-up, a number of interviewees provided the example of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, along with some educational applications that were clearly identified as being successful examples of electronic service delivery. However responses pointed out that not all services were fully electronic and that there had been a lack of joining up to facilitate services.

It was reported that there remain issues around citizen authentication, perhaps reflected in a lack of trust of government, thus encouraging service users to want face-to-face service. It was also stated that the government's e-government push had started before the main drive for digital enablement of the telephone exchanges, restricting access to broadband- speed Internet and thus limiting progress, particularly in rural areas. The usage of e-services was expected to increase as a younger generation came to deal with government.

Perhaps depressingly for those assuming e-government is being used by more than a minority, a respondent from a large city stated that whilst 60% of residents were believed to have access to the Internet, only 6% were using that authority's e-government services, which was echoed by another respondent with a large population.

In terms of whether e-government could have been done differently, there was general agreement that this was so, although the argument that 'hindsight is a wonderful thing' was acknowledged. However, a change had come about more recently in that local government now felt able to influence central government thinking rather than merely being on the receiving end of similar policies.

In retrospect the data indicates standardisation and centralisation should have been primary aims of the e-government agenda, along with the need to clarify legislation and guidance, so as to ensure processes can be dealt with online. There should have been the need to change processes first. With some risk analysis and perhaps relaxation of controls it was stated, by one respondent, that some services could be largely automated.

A more focused approach that incentivised users, rather than the “build it and they will come” approach that had been employed, is perhaps needed. Such an approach would add value to the services on the Internet. This might have been pursued by assisting people in using the Internet first, then prioritising the services to be dealt with, along with employing strategic planning in their roll-out.

In defence of the government’s programme, one of the respondents claimed that it had gained traction for e-government, and that without it the current progress would not have been made. Again, in retrospect, it is difficult to evaluate if the reactive approach to e-government gained more initial ground from a standing start than a ‘measured’ approach employing metrics, pilots and distributing best practice from the centre would have done.

4.6.2.3. Practicality of using metrics or measures

The use of metrics was supported by the interviewees, although there was some doubt as to whether they could have been employed at the outset, and this was also subject to the systems being used. Measures were thought necessary to help understand in detail who the people are that want to transact with councils, what they want and how they are able to do it. The metric has also to be about something which the council is trying to achieve.

Customer satisfaction was mentioned on two occasions as a possible system of measurement, although this was probably slightly redefined in differing ways by some other interviewees, who suggested:

- Channel quality of information as accessed by the users (interpreted by the researcher as how satisfied the citizens are with the service data they are presented with)
- The system of measurement needs to be able to develop the service rather than just a number-crunching exercise
- Quality, cost and whether service outcomes improved – related to strategic objectives
- There is a propensity to use certain channels

There was little apparent awareness of any proposals from central government, as discussed in Section 2.3.5. Developing measures, apart from ones around policy, with no-one being aware of proposals to do with implementation. A general concern was that local government replicated central government in the manner services are provided, with a weak core and strong silo-based delivery arms, which presented difficulties for delivering change along with the enforcement of corporate metrics that relate to service delivery.

The central government interviewee related back to the report “Service Transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer” (Varney 2006, p.85), which whilst largely focused on central government did make a proposal for metrics, particularly in contact centres:

- “80 percent of contacts made by citizens or businesses to be resolved on first contact;
- 50 per cent reduction in avoidable contact;
- reducing the number of information requests handled by telephone by 50 per cent;
- making the Web the primary access point for all simple information and advice requests”

None of those being interviewed referred to the concepts of public value or social capital as possible measures nor any of the measures outlined in the government reports mentioned in 2.3. Metrics and user satisfaction. This possibly indicates how little recognition such proxy measures have within the practitioner community, although still referenced within the policy domain. They had been identified in the literature as potential measures, although by Section 2.8. Key research questions had been relegated to a subsidiary indicator. Overall there was support for a system of measurement, especially in terms of managing multiple channels.

4.6.2.4. Low level of usage recording

Whilst there was enthusiasm from interviewees to record channel usage, low levels of recording were blamed on a lack of systems, the difficulty in recording channel usage, along with the perceived need for all contact to go through one point. Thus it was generally considered that services were focused on delivery without assessing the impact, and that recording channel usage had low priority as a result of the perceived low value of its use. The interviewees generally felt that services needed to be more astute in doing this, whilst the central government respondent believed people should be recording it. One response, in particular, stated that:

“It’s not a big issue and it’s an interesting question because I think it demonstrates that we are not actually that too bothered about the channel switch that we say we are always bothered about.”

In consideration of multi-channel recording or customer engagement systems interviewees considered this “best practice” or the “next step” and that councils lacked a “really good joined-up view of the customer”. Although one interviewee stated that he didn’t know how useful such systems were, this was the exception. The difference from the existing private sector usage was described

as due to the diverse range of services needing to be dealt with in local government, since any system would need to apply to them all, whereas private industry tended to have a core business.

In confirmation of the possible value, one interview conversation proceeded as follows:

“Q. Multi-channel recording or customer engagement systems are becoming common in the private sector, why not in the public sector, or are they?”

A. I think we will be. Actually I will need to go away and ask the question because we are just rolling out ***** which will be used by every channel as a consistent way of dealing with the customer. I am not sure we record on that how people contacted us but I can go away and ask the question.

Q. it would be a useful measure for you on that so you multi-channel.

A. Clearly as we are going to have to measure on-line contact because otherwise we won't know when we are getting to 35%.

Q. But you know when you get to 35% if you haven't got the whole figure will you?

A. No, no, that's quite true. “

Hence demonstrating the potential and practical value of multi-channel usage recording as proposed in the model in Section 2.8. Key research questions! Since this response came from the director responsible for transformation at the an exceptionally large local council and thus in charge of what is probably one of the biggest transformation programmes in the same geographical area, the conversation possibly portrays that the lessons of measuring across all channels are only just taking hold. In this instance a private sector partner was involved and any refinement would have to be done with their agreement. This was one of the inherent difficulties resulting from the outsourcing of infrastructure demonstrated during the international adoption of NPM, as discussed in Section 2.4.1. The effect of NPM.

The value of multi-channel recording of citizen engagement was seen as a priority by both the CIO and Strategic Director from the County Council, especially for the particular initiative they were undertaking with establishing multiple services and multiple channels at a single point of citizen contact. This was only seen as constrained by the range of public sector services delivered in comparison to the private sector. Whilst the relationships between the partners had been established during the original e-government period, delivery that was only now occurring and required measurement to demonstrate the value.

4.6.2.5. Patchy recording for avoidable contact

On the subject of the National Indicator 14, discussed extensively in Section 2.3.4. NI14, it was believed there were a number of difficulties with recording it including the fact that it was a new indicator and not fully understood, that it was not easy to do without an appropriate way to record, that there were overwhelming volumes for the services to record, and that it meant a “retro-fit” to any recording applications in use. A “retro-fit” meaning that it would require additional development, along with further probable cost, to any existing CRM or similar system.

In addition it was believed that there was some personal interpretation of the definition in the back offices of local authorities resulting in there being no standard view of what is “avoidable contact”. Also, since multiple channels create silos too, those managing web sites, telephony or contact centres may not have a standard view, either.

NI14 was also identified as a negative measure, i.e. recording what was done incorrectly resulting in the potential to drive perverse behaviour, in that services might totally ignore contact, rather than be recorded as failing. This had been one of the many original criticisms of the indicator. Similarly, negative feedback

to the measure had been received from the first research phase (Section 4.2.1. Review of phase 1 of the research) along with during the second phase (Section 4.3.1. Review of phase 2 of the research).

4.6.2.6. “Citizens” or “customers”

Whether users of government services should be called “citizens” or “customers” matters to the research. This is due to the commoditization of government services brought about by NPM and similar practices discussed in Section 2.4. The marketization of citizenship, which resulted in changes of approach when delivering government services.

In considering whether the users of government services should be called “citizens” or “customers” there was no agreement and the eight interviewees split evenly on this. However asking the question raised some thoughts. The central government interviewee accepted that there were “subtleties and a nuance between them” and that there was a need to look at those being provided with services from both angles, whilst personally preferring “customer”, being from a private sector background.

One interviewee believed that the person concerned wouldn’t care, whilst another thought they were both, but at different times. Interestingly, one interviewee responded to this issue by describing what he considered as government’s two customer bases, one being the individual customer, the other being the community. The community supported the enforcement and regulation role of government, since it was for the benefit of the whole that such actions might be carried out.

In terms of the difference between “customer” and “citizen”, when establishing a service delivery strategy, there was no clear opinion. It was proposed that a citizen should have influence in the way services were delivered through their elected representatives.

As one responder described it, a local authority’s best customers are frequently the worst ones, and so the label ultimately depends on the situation. Another believed the service delivery strategy related to the customer element, whilst the strategic and policy outcomes were around the citizen.

Another respondent stated that local authorities should be leading and setting the standard that everyone else could build on and another that councils might develop a model where the customer is much more in control.

The need to discuss the describing of users of government services as “customers” or “citizens” or other label had arisen in Section 2.4. The marketization of citizenship and impacted on the elements of digital inclusion discussed in Section 2.5. Digital inclusion and exclusion. Whilst not a direct research question, such lack of clarity in government’s ability to view those it was claiming to serve would probably affect the use of “public value” and “social capital”, as considered in Section 2.6. Public value and social capital, as measures, or proxy measures, in the delivery of services. Overall, it would appear necessary for public servants and politicians to adopt the “nuanced” approach when considering them from either angle, and avoid mimicking entirely the private sector.

4.6.2.7. Relative overall cost of electronic and other delivery channels

The interviewees, on the whole, felt that electronic channels should be cheaper but there were many caveats on this. It was thought the upfront costs might be excessive for smaller authorities, that not all costs of electronic services are captured but also that the processes need to be resolved first. As one respondent stated:

“to make the electronic transactions much cheaper you often have to switch off or downsize the traditional channels. So if you give an electronic transaction capability on top of your usual service but you don’t reduce the number of people, the number of buildings etc. involved in traditional channels; you are just layering on additional costs.”

Similarly the central government respondent advised that:

“Other services, in essence, there is lots of interaction that you need, say when someone is dying or had a bereavement or they need lots of care or help in terms of benefits. So you may be able to start things on-line but actually there is a whole host of support that needs to come in. And you need to look at each individual service interaction to determine in essence, first of all, if the whole lot can be done on-line with self-service as a straight through process.”

And, in terms of emphasis on the business change from another CIO:

“There are huge efficiency savings to be made but you’ve got to do it on the basis of redesigning your entire service in terms of people, process, organisational structures, reporting lines, all that, cultures even, as well as the technology if you are going to get the most out of it.”

This was then taken further “I actually think we have only just scratched the surface of what we could actually achieve if we did an IT enabled change programme, rather than an E-Government programme”.

In terms of whether cheaper channels should be focused on, one interviewee described this as a “political decision”, however the interviewees in general agreed on keeping all channels open, whilst focusing on the cheaper ones to fund the universal access. It was also considered that electronic channels might

be mediated³⁰ to reduce costs and that incentives should be employed to encourage a shift to self-service channels.

Six out of the eight interviewees answered that they didn't think it fair to focus on electronic channels. However the two exceptions conceded that the money saved could be used to mediate services or reduce taxation. However as the central government interviewee stated:

"I do not believe it is fair to say all services should be on-line or all services should be made across all channels. You know you have got to be a little but more sophisticated in terms of the analysis on that."

Which is perhaps put into real-life context by another CIO's personal reflection that:

"No because I have got an elderly father who would never dream of using an electronic channel so there has got to be ways of dealing with that. So because we are a universal service provider we have got to make sure that we are universally accessible."

In analysis of the responses to this question, we can consider the proposed approach to the research questions in Section 2.8. Key research questions and refined following the initial questionnaire feedback, which are:

³⁰ Mediation, in this sense, is the employment of a human operator to interface between the service user and the technology

- What systems of measurement, including government required ones, are being employed?
- If, and how well, systems of measurement are guiding multi-channel service delivery?
- Whether the model and theory proposed in the research or parts of the model are being employed anywhere, along with citizen satisfaction within a system of measurement?

Neither the second questionnaire nor the interviews had indicated the need for further refinement to the questions. This had taken up the challenge to ensure that government services were delivered in a manner accessible to all citizens, as discussed in Section 2.5. Digital inclusion and exclusion. The model provided facilitates service delivery in such a manner.

4.6.3. Analysis of phase 3 of the research

The third phase of the research was to focus on three questions as stated in Section 4.4.1. Questions from phases 1 and 2 to be employed in phase 3 and reproduced below:

- Whilst at least eight channels are regularly reported to be used, there is still a low level of usage recording – why?
- Multi-channel recording or customer engagement systems are common in the private sector, why not in the public sector?
- According to my surveys there hasn't been a systematic use of cross-channel recording for avoidable contact (NI14) – why not?

From the interview responses it would appear that local government, even at the larger authorities, is still at the early stages of monitoring channel usage and

quality, although there appears to be a growing awareness of the possible benefits from doing so. It is also clear that NI14 had received little overall support as a measure within the local government community, and rumours abounded that it would not remain much longer³¹. It is also clear that the proposed model in Section 2.8. Key research questions, Figure 2.2 is suitable and viable to be employed in both monitoring channel usage, as well as quality in terms of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Whilst there were occasional variations in expression employed or emphasis used, the interviewees, including the central government one, accepted that mistakes may have been made; but that ICT could only facilitate changes to government services, not change services or government.

The senior staff interviewed appeared to acknowledge their responsibilities to deliver services to the entire community, and thus the hangover from NPM or post-bureaucratic thought that encouraged the consumerisation of citizens, although causing some confusion, has not resulted in long term harm at their particular authorities. However, it remains to be seen how this affects the citizen as community participant.

There had been no formal post-implementation review of e-government and assumptions have been made following 2006 that almost all government services are being delivered electronically. This research presents an acceptance now from a wide range of authorities, in both senses, as evidenced in Section 4.6.2.2. Rate of take-up of electronic services by the public, that not all services are suitable for electronic delivery, that business process review is priority before employing ICT and that services should be delivered or engineered from the public's point of view. These should be treated as lessons learned and enshrined in practice before another generation repeats the

³¹ NI14 was withdrawn from the National Indicator list as of April 2010, the announcement being within weeks of the last interview. DCLG (2010, p.4)

mistakes ten years on. This was emphasised when the London CIO stated during interview that:

“in the authorities that I am working with, which is a number across London, there is a willingness now to invest in self-service that hasn’t been there before but with a real keen focus on how it will drive channel migration as opposed to the 2005 targets which were very much ‘Field of Dreams’, ‘build it and they will come’, kind of approach”.

Having analysed the findings from the three empirical phases of the research and disclosed where particular issues have arisen in the first electronic government period, it is then necessary to consider why policy and practice combined in the way they did to present the gaps in delivery or expectations revealed. This is being done to identify, highlight and thus, hopefully, reduce further waste of increasingly sparse resources, and is considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 - FOUNDATIONS OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT, A DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The information presented in CHAPTER 1 – RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT and in greater detail within CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW reveals a range of historical circumstances defining the structure of government services, along with the more recent context established by some politicians, users and commentators desiring them to be delivered in a more business-like fashion. These events were paralleled by the rapid deployment of information technology towards the end of the Twentieth Century. Whilst technology does have a role in managing government, it still remains to be seen how such a volatile platform as government, when considering areas such as policy, can be suitably “underpinned” by rapidly changing information and communication tools. Having researched some of the key questions being presented, and outlined the outcomes in CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH, this penultimate chapter considers the fundamental practices that may provide the basis for successful e-government delivery.

Although some of the theories involved in IS research are discussed in Section 3.1. Introduction: philosophy, theory and model, it became clear during the empirical research that theories employing a wider social and political world-view were necessary, to support the actual and potential changes that e-government could result in. These are considered next.

5.1. Theoretical reflections

When considering the role of electronic government, electronic service delivery or the transformational government agenda one can reflect on the statement by Pratchett (1999, p.731):

“new technologies can have an important effect in structuring and shaping the decision-making processes in government and in providing

institutional legacies which channel day-to-day workings of public organizations.”

Which was more recently reiterated by Zappen et al (2008, p.24) where they concluded that the most exciting outcome from the technology was to envisage how it could be employed in assisting government in serving people, the concept of which had been part of e-government, since it started.

These opinions are in opposition to three findings by Kraemer & King (2006) and require us to examine the various theories underpinning government and society, in order to consider e-government. The findings of Kraemer & King, which are quoted in full due to their possible importance, are:

- “IT application does not cause reform and cannot encourage it where the political will to pursue the reform does not exist.”
- “IT application has brought relatively little change to organization structures, and seems to reinforce existing structures.”
- “The benefits of information technology have not been evenly distributed within government organizational functions: the primary beneficiaries have been functions favoured by the dominant political-administrative coalitions of public administrations, and not those of technical elites, middle managers, clerical staff, or ordinary citizens.”

This opposition is supported by Orlikowski & Robey (1991, p.162) who state that “the dilemma in attempting organizational change is that such action may directly conflict with established patterns”. The above was supported by one particular weblog respondent (June 2009) who stated that “CONsultation as it is fondly called in our borough in X, is thoroughly discredited. People use it only to ensure they can at least state in the comments box what they really want to say, but aren’t given the option to do so!” Whilst a divergent view had been stated by another respondent (November 2008) that “the financial manager and their staff need to become familiar with these new tools and incorporate them into their strategies”, indicating that cultural changes were required amongst staff, and as

a comment in April 2010 stated, “with the exception of a few, the majority of MPs and their staff don’t get it”, there is a need for education amongst politicians, as well. Similarly, from a comment in February 2009, the Power of Information review in 2008 “shows a lack of joined up thinking in Whitehall”. This may indicate an unwillingness, even if Unconscious, to change practices, processes and organizational structures within government, at the behest of those outside of it.

Until well into the research process there appeared to be a lack of theoretical propositions that satisfied the UK approach to e-government and, as outlined in Section 1.2. Motivation, there was also a lack of a politically unfettered analysis. The research has publicly proposed the model/conceptual framework, outlined in Section 2.8. Key research questions, that had been developed. Although the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology, and to some extent electronic government, were discussed in Section 3.1. Introduction: philosophy, theory and model, following the empirical work, deeper analysis of the socio-political context was required to ensure the correct grounding of the theory and model within existing systems of government.

There are a number of current macro-theories that help in describing the state of society but these have little connection with the range of possible micro-theories that relate to different aspects of the implementation of electronic government. However, if Latour (1996, p.372) is correct and actor network theory allows us to ignore the micro-macro distinction, a consideration of the networks is required instead. Orlikowski & Robey (1991, p.148) similarly argue in support of structuration theory in that it “allows elimination of the artificial partitioning of research attention between macro and micro levels of analysis, because the process of structuration operates at multiple levels of analysis: individual, group, and social system”. A differing but equivalent approach is taken by Pinch & Bijker (1987, p.30) who state that “In deciding which problems are relevant, the social groups concerned with the artefact and the meanings

that those groups give to the artefact play a crucial role. A problem is defined as such only when there is a social group for which it constitutes a 'problem'".

If the networks are considered as couplings, then, in an analysis employing institutional theory, Akesson et al (2008, p.88), consider the potential benefits of e-government have not been derived due to the looseness of the connection of e-government to "organisational action" and the conflicting demands placed on government. This is would appear to be supported by the work of Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley (2008, p.733) who state that in their analysis:

"unless and until the dichotomy of power is addressed between bottom-up public engagement and top-down policy making, the results in this study would suggest that the linear e-government maturity models will remain as theoretical conceptions of the ideal state."

It is possible to view e-government through a lens provided by Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley (2008, p.726) that "the networking properties of the internet encourage a Habermasian belief that personal interests can be transformed as a product of engaging in dialogue with others and that personal interests may be transcended in defence to the common interest". On the contrary Rethermeyer (2006, p.279) states in his conclusion that "the data say that the Internet has not become a force for democratizing policy decisions" and that "there is preliminary evidence that the Internet is increasingly a tool of the powerful and entrenched rather than the new and reform-minded". From an alternative power perspective, Lowndes et al (2006, p.560) concluded, after comparing a range of councils and without mention of the Internet, that local authorities "can actively shape the environment within which citizens make their decisions about engagement". Inferring cultural rather than technological change is the prime operator. However, as one respondent confirmed (April 2010), there are possible second and third order effects to be considered, since matters raised online might affect offline political thinking, without them being related back to the online originator. This also demonstrates the complex divergence of networks in a structured world.

E-government has been defined in a number of differing ways, as was demonstrated in Section 1.3. Definitions. The definition employed, whether covertly or overtly, can affect the interpretation of the way it is delivered, along with the political structure the society involved is based on, whether representative, deliberative democracy or any other political system. The political system and its employees may constrain the extent to which e-government can be used and, therefore, measured. Jaeger (2005, p.707) reported Aristotle's belief that "democratic government could only extend as far as the distance that a person could walk in one day, since active participation by all citizens was essential to democratic governance", and went on to propose that "e-government uniquely resolves many of the issues of size and distance". In structuration terms this may be complicated by Tobler's first law of geography where "everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things" as reported in Sui (2004).

That participation in democracy was not a straightforward social concept was outlined by Lipset (1963, p.219) when considering the electoral system:

"Thus neither high nor low rates of participation and voting are in themselves good or bad for democracy; the extent and nature of that participation reflect other factors which determine far more decisively the system's chances to develop or survive. But the extent of apathy and the varying levels of participation of different segments of the population do clarify the underlying consensus and conflict within the political process."

Thus putting politics online to circumvent issues of time and distance may not bring about the desired aims. Further, a number of theories should be considered in the context of social and organizational structures, and electronic service delivery.

5.1.1. Structuration theory

In the fundamental text on the theory of structuration, Giddens (1986, p.xxx) states in the introduction that:

“The points of connection of structuration theory with empirical research are to do with working out the logical implications of studying a ‘subject matter’ of which the researcher is already a part and with elucidating the substantive connotations of the core notions of action and structure.”

Giddens’ description clearly outlines the methodology employed by the researcher which was action research employing social networking tools, in order to comprehend both the rationale behind e-government and discover any possible metrics, where appropriate, as described in Section 3.2. Research approach or strategy.

Partly in criticism, Kouroubali (2002, p.8) concluded that it is a theory with a static view of structures and doesn’t account for the diverse professional groups involved. This somewhat misconstrues the original theory, which considers social structures in the broadest sense and can reflect all such groups, whilst support for the employment of structuration theory in an ICT context comes from Orlikowski & Robey (1991, p.146) who believe in contrast that the theory can integrate the divide between subjectivist and objectivist viewpoints explored in Section 3.1. Introduction: philosophy, theory and model.

Perhaps something which may be considered in parallel, the complexity of government, is raised by Rethemeyer & Hatmaker (2008, p.619) who state that:

“For at least 40 years [...] scholars have recognized that *policymaking* did not fit the textbook model of ‘politicians decide and administrators do.’ Instead a far messier and, some would urge, less democratically legitimate form of governance has emerged.”

Stoker (2006, p.55) proposes that “in the context of public decision making in democracies, all forms of management are in creative tension with inputs from the world of politics or democracy”. Henman (2009, p.10) believes that e-

government compounds the complexity described before, arguing that it enables complex policy and administrative developments, along with the perception that such practices can be facilitated.

This reinforcement of existing structures is supported by Pina et al (2010, p.15) who state that “e-government initiatives are still predominantly non-interactive and non-deliberative. They tend to reflect present service delivery patterns, not to transform them”. To some extent, an approach to change existing practices around government deliberation was proposed by a weblog response in December 2008, where it was stated that:

“I believe that we must engage our customers about government finance with those existing tools. I believe that the government budget, accounting and auditing professions must incorporate these tools into their existing strategies. The easiest way to implement them is to incorporate them, where appropriate, into your defined business process.”

Meaning that social media tools are employed as an ‘add-on’ to the existing methods to facilitate interaction.

Allowing for the diversity of society within a political structure, we can accept that the introduction of technology will have an effect, but considering the above limitations of structuration theory are unable to forecast the possibly diverse results. This might also explain the limitations, so far witnessed, to its employment and evaluation. Johnston (2001, p.237) pointed out an issue with structuration theory in it placing technology as the material environment or the medium of the structuration process, in other words ‘tools’. However he is against technology or such tools being portrayed as ‘agents’, as in the actor-network theory (ANT) developed by Latour and Callon, which would give the ‘tools’ intentions, whilst he proposes accepting them as a form of “co-agent”.

5.1.2. Actor network theory

In considering e-government, or even government service delivery, as an actor network, the actors consist of politicians, officers or civil servants and the citizen, now so often portrayed as a customer. All have roles as agents, which proponents of electronic government may be attempting to change, primarily in the case of e-government by the removal of an agent-agent interface when the customer-citizen deals directly with the tool. In the back office, should that remain, the officer/civil servant similarly possibly consider themselves to interact with a tool rather than the customer citizen. Chen et al (2009, p.25) argue that ANT provides for interpretive flexibility of the network when “different interests of different stakeholders are inscribed and translated”. Further, in Stanforth (2006, p.38) “Machines are as much actors in the networks as are the humans”. Which may have a related relationship with the labelling of ICTs not as tools but as the Heideggerian “Gestell”, by Cordella (2006, p.199), which provides the technology with some aspect of human existence. Which is similarly employed by Ciborra & Hanseth (1998, p.14) who state that “By inscribing programs of action into a piece of technology, for example through BPR, technology becomes an “actant” imposing its inscribed program of action on its users”. This might also equate with Zizek’s view, Gunkel (2007, p.5), that information technology has moved from being instrumentalist to the “thing itself”.

If one envisages ANT to the extent of the semiotic or as Bloomfield & Hayes (2009, p.464) associate it, that technology (as with organization) is always hybrid in character, and see the truly contingent nature of society, as when employing transaction cost theory, costs start to crop up everywhere. An example might be the library assistant in the local library providing ICT access to the digitally excluded, whose library costs now include broadband, ICT equipment and staff time supporting it. This takes the issues raised in Section 2.3.8. Cost of service to a new level of complexity.

5.1.3. Adaptive structuration theory

As identified by Devadoss et al (2002) tools may either have the intentions of the authors or accidental ones from the social context they are presented in. This could apply to the ICTs employed by e-government as tools or Gestell.

Adaptive structuration theory (AST) proposed by DeSanctis & Poole (1994, p.122), makes allowances for the variations in technology usage and its resultant effects such that they propose that: “adaptation of technology structures by organizational actors is a key factor in organizational change”. However, in the context of electronic service delivery the initial change is in the role of the actors facilitated by the technology and as Tseng discovered in his application of structuration theory (2008, p.421) to e-government: “ICT choices have been made by human agents while human agents are influenced by specific institutional properties”. A similar conclusion is made by Foulger (2009, p.6) who states that “we both use media as a tool of structuration and structure media through the process of structuration”.

Devadoss et al (2002, p.256), considering the highly successful roll-out of e-government in Singapore state that “the overall success of any e-government will have to include an understanding and appreciation of the social interactions with the structures involved in the e-government initiatives”. In the case of Singapore this had been done and (Devadoss et al, p.257) “the government also worked on restructuring the policies and laws to enhance the use of electronic commerce”. This remains an outstanding issue according to the research in that even with the government-mandated indicator, NI14, there appeared to be a lack of active change being employed which was revealed after two questionnaires as is shown in Section 4.3.2. Data analysis of phase 2 of the research. Similarly, a lack of empathy between the layers of government has its own limitations, as highlighted by a response to a weblog post in February 2009 which argued that “I know there are parts of the public sector that are inefficient but the targets from central government tar us all with the

same brush, which means that those that are already efficient suffer or are branded as a failure.”

Service delivery media, whether Internet, face-to-face or telephony, from this investigation frequently appear to be structured around the networks ‘envisaged’ by the network of politicians, bureaucrats and suppliers. However, multiple networks are operational in the realm of the citizen-customer and also economic forces act within the networks from both the bureaucracy and the citizen-customer. Further, Horrocks (2009, p.111) identifies the emergence of a “power loop” around consultants who have influenced government policy “in promoting the development of both e-government initiatives and projects”.

Thus, an accurate comprehension of the structures can be seen to be required to accurately define the costs of service delivery, as discussed in Section 2.3.8. Cost of service , and to successfully deliver services. In terms of researching organizations Orlikowski & Robey (1991, p.165) state that:

“Studying the process of structuration within an organization requires attending to both human action (which lends itself to study by ethnographic and qualitative fieldwork) and institutional properties (which may be studied via more quantitative methodologies such as survey research or quasi-experimentation). Researchers should also be cognizant of the role of historical and contextual factors in the process of structuration, and accommodate these in their research designs. The implication is that we should encompass a variety of research methodologies within emergent research strategy, such as provided by a contextualized and longitudinal program of investigation.”

If, as van der Waal & Vloeimans (2005, p.13) conclude, “the institutional structures are affected by ongoing e-government developments in order to improve e-government quality“, and institutions are actually modified, the process is consistent. However, if the structures are not changed or changed minimally, the developments are, in efficiency terms, wasted. This is important in recognising the need for expenditure, as observed by a respondent in August 2010 (highlighting the benefit of the learning, and the weblog):

“the fact that councils actually need to invest more (and of course, better) in their websites in order to reduce costs of service delivery, while not denying that there was plenty of room for improvement in getting VFM from spending on the web. Your contribution on costs (with details way beyond the attention span of the average Telegraph reader or most journalists for that matter) is really useful addition to the debate.”

Thus, those implementing e-government change, need to be completely aware of the social and business structures involved affected by active intervention, along with accidental or unplanned effects that may arise. These may be controlled by effective project management, but require comprehension of the networks and dependencies at the outset. This approach replicates the action research methodology employed in this dissertation.

5.1.4. Democratic structures

In accepting electronic government as the natural and historical heir of New Public Management, one needs to consider its theoretical positioning in any structure. The model of government employed in the nations of those promoting New Public Management (NPM), as described from Section 1.5. International perspective onwards, would, in practice, need to be a direct democracy, or at the minimum a subset such as participatory or deliberative democracy for the changes expected in policy to be employed, which was observed by Christensen & Laegreid (2004, p.19) as an “in-built inconsistency in NPM”.

In the process of criticising post-bureaucratic theory McSweeney (2006, p.31) states that the epochalist vision involved in such thinking “denies the complex, diverse, coexisting and interpenetrating nature of organisations”. Such being the format of organizations that structuration theory aims to consider.

Similarly, the direct, deliberative or participatory model of democracy would be the only one capable of fully articulating the benefits of electronic government

as described by its proponents. However, the majority of democracies remain at a representative level, and as such, can only employ indirect feedback or pressure from their citizens. Hence the reality is that whilst electronic government can assist in delivering services, it can only potentially assist in changing services or government structures, since its users have no decision-making power. Participatory Appreciation and Appreciative Inquiry, as potentially tools of participatory or deliberative democracy both run against the grain of representative democracy, in a similar way that extending e-government to be more than the delivery of information and services does. Encouraging direct feedback to government is circumventing representation. This was confirmed by Collins and Butler (2003, p.61) when they conclude that:

“the features of liberal representative democracy, particularly the role of deliberation, informed assent and accountability have been neglected. Speed of response has been emphasised to the cost of democratic filters and checks on public opinion; enhanced choice, enabled by mass customisation, presents problems of social fragmentation; and the application of market research is no substitute for political discourse and engagement.”

It is also recognized by Meijer & Zouridis (2004, p.6) who state that:

“structuration theory and Orlikowski’s interpretation of it also stress that structures are not only reinforced but also challenged in social interactions. This means that transformation from government to e-government can result in institutional transformation.”

Such a situation is also emphasised by Senyucel & Stubbs (2005, p.41) in their conclusion where they identify e-government as a “vision” of how government might be “structured”, and whilst this is not just through the technology, it is facilitated by it. However, change in government structure is rarely such a direct connection especially when political will needs to be employed.

Kampen & Snijkers (2003, p.494) claim that the four premises of e-democracy:

- convenience will lead to participation,

- the public needs more information,
- the Internet as a “massive town meeting”,
- that democracy will flourish in the absence of power brokers

appear to be indefensible and that the Internet is primarily a source of information and routine transactions, and not for political action. Whilst the wider context is highlighted by Stahl (2005, p.84) in his conclusion:

“While framing e-Government and e-Democracy in terms of (e-)commerce is not a bad thing per se, political decision makers need to be aware that it can produce moral problems that not only jeopardise the success of e-Government and e-Democracy but that can affect the very legitimacy of democratic structures.³²

In fact Snider (2001, p.1) states that “encouraging e-democracy is less desirable to elected officials. On the contrary, most of what they do while in office is to try to increase their chances for re-election”. He went on further in Snider (2009, p.149) to conclude that there was a conflict of interest in the use of information technology by those elected, since it could be employed to make them more accountable to the public.

From feedback to the weblog and other instruments there would appear to be an expectation for e-government to deliver e-democracy or in some way transform government, such as the weblog comment against the “E-democracy” post in December 2009 that “the confusion between democracy and government – not necessarily always in terms of ‘e’ – is something I continually come across, occasionally in quite alarming circumstances”. Similarly the interviewee from the large metropolitan council described how “the fundamental fallacy of E-Government, that transformation follows rolling out E-Government, as night follows day, and therefore the sense of a very large investment which,

³² There may be additional issues involved around security for e-democracy if a market model is followed, as described in Fairweather & Rogerson (2006, p.174)

to be fair, has significantly improved infrastructure issues, but cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, have achieved its stated aim of transforming government". However, as considered in Sections 5.1.1. Structuration theory through to 5.1.3. Adaptive structuration theory, when dealing with massively complex organizations, structured over time, any change expected may require substantial additional time.

It is the view of the researcher considering the outcomes of the research that whilst electronic media may facilitate communications with those holding power and across those wanting power, of themselves they cannot change constituted structures. They can, however, exclude those without ability or access to such media from such communications, if those media become the accepted standard.

5.1.5. Further considerations on theory

As Heeks & Bhatnagar (1999) proposed, there is a need to close the conception-reality gap between the view of e-government from citizens' angle and that from the government prior to any serious work. The employment of gap analysis was discussed in Section 2.3.6. Gap analysis as part of developing metrics but the gap in question here is at a much higher level being a political one around democratic reform, since, as recognized by Stevenson (2006, p.8) "the democratisation of democracy requires the devolution of power, constitutional reform, citizen's juries, but perhaps above all the development of a strong civic culture". This was also identified by Hacker (2004, p.6) who considered that "the complexities of democratisation within societies where leaders are likely to resist political reforms require a theoretical understanding that accounts for both active agency of reformers and structural constraints of the status quo". However, Stoker (2006, p.9) considers some less "revolutionary" alternatives may be possible in suitable societies such as public consultation using new technology, all the time assuming that they want to take

part, that they will take part and are able to (not being excluded for one reason or another).

In developing social choice theory, Arrow (1963) and Sen (1982) have employed complex mathematical theorems which demonstrate the difficulties inherent in attempting to produce a truly egalitarian society given a range of conditions. However, electronic government, whilst having been developed on the bandwagon of NPM and perhaps intimated promises of better governance is essentially only another channel of service delivery. Whilst ICT has an accepted role in government, it is unlikely to be employed in assisting the generation of these conditions.

As Stanforth concluded (2006, p.35) “the application of ICT is an inherently political process and that a successful outcome requires continuous incremental action and improvisation to address the ongoing issues as they emerge”. For as Wildavsky observed (1987, p.17) for the social sciences, “unanticipated consequences are a staple of social life”, and these will be best addressed in an ongoing manner, whilst ultimately having little effect on the political system unless the politicians wish it and confirmed by Senyucel & Stubbs (2005, p.26) identifying from Giddens the “notion of inevitable unanticipated and unintended consequences of purposeful action”. Further, as Hacker (2007, p.7) acknowledges the dynamic of a networked society “is also consistent with structuration theories which assert that changing micro-level processes of communication can effect changes in larger-level social systems”. This dynamic was exemplified by Henman (2004, p.24) who, when discussing partnerships and networked government, stated that:

“Partnerships require a lot of organisational, relationship and technical work to establish and maintain. They require that all partners continue to extract mutual benefits from the partnership and maintain levels of trust. As such partnerships constantly need to be made and re-made.”

Which reinforces the complexity that the Internet on its own will not resolve.

In considering electronic government in terms of the morphogenetic cycles described by Horrocks (2009); the cycles are not identifiable or able to be isolated due to initiative overload in the period from 1997 to 2009. Although some clear cycles, for example the main e-government one in the period 2001 to 2006, this was also covered by and overlapped a number of others including the Modernising Government agenda and Local Government Review 2003 as can be seen from the list of key documents in Annex 2 - Key documents in the history of electronic government in England and considered in some detail in Section 1.4. History in England.

5.1.6. Concluding theoretical reflections

From the above it is possible for the employment of technology to collate and refine collective intelligence to develop process and ultimately service improvements, subject to the representative, or similar, government structure. This aligns with the tentative theory that was developed as discussed in Section 2.8. Key research questions, that the establishment of a satisfaction/dissatisfaction metric across all channels will facilitate the delivery of services over them, including electronic or future ones. However, structures and even legislation may need to be modified as part of any conclusive change.

Whilst seeing benefits in adaptive structuration theory (Section 5.1.3. Adaptive structuration theory), in particular its allowance for unintended consequences, this theory is focused around the technology and there is a need to reconcile the social and political structures with all the potential media involved (including electronic, traditional and any future ones), perhaps demanding an adaptive structured media theory? This revised theory would be reflected in the employment of the model and theory being proposed by the researcher that the collection of qualitative data at a service level by service channel, along with

quantitative usage data recorded over time, will identify issues with service delivery. The researcher's model and theory would recognise and support social and channel movements as they occurred. This would be supported by the view of the CIO who responded to the relevant interview question by stating that:

"We are too narrowly focused on direct delivery rather than our analysis of the impact of what we are doing holistically. So, you know, take Total Place and they are having to go in and actually capture their own metrics because they don't exist and I think one of the things we'll learn from Total Place is my goodness why don't we know this? Why do we have to go and find it out? You would expect if we were running these services as a commercial operation this would be our bread and butter? So again, it's the attitudes and the concept are the challenges."

Total Place is described in Section 2.7. Later developments, and, as described there, was planned to introduce better service feedback from citizens. In this instance the comment relates as much to the lack of focus on the service recipient by government across government, and welcoming the need to collect and employ feedback in order to work within increasingly complex structures.

5.2. Reflections on the research methodology

According to Wang et al (2007, p.80) "to facilitate the design of social-technical systems and enhance their performance, social computing must learn from sociology and anthropology and integrate psychological and organizational theories". This would be similarly applicable to any research in the area and the need to be aware of and employ a broad range of tactics to gain access to the practitioner world, whilst being able to remain aloof and avoiding potential political or emotional entanglement.

The researcher has employed a number of tools as research instruments to draw experience from the practitioner realm, whilst at the same time feeding impressions and concepts back into it. The use of social media has

demonstrated its viability, but like traditional tools may be most successful when employed by someone with access to the target audience, which it was in this instance. This requirement was also confirmed in Section 5.1.1. Structuration theory.

In general, whilst the weblog provided a central hub for the hosting of questionnaires, along with relating thinking between government and academics, its use as a host for a model-building exercise appears to have been limited and the researcher is thankful that a wiki wasn't employed, since it would probably have remained largely static. However its long-term existence, unlike the conventional despatch of ad-hoc questionnaires, must have provided a modicum of credibility to the research, along with the research instruments the weblog hosted and reported on.

The surveys and concluding interviews provided views across the timeline of awareness raising, as the apparent real nature of e-government started to be realized, as demonstrated in some questionnaire responses and feedback to the weblog, such as where it was stated that "I agree that by failing to focus on process we got lost in the tree filled woods and that means the next big focus is on BPR/WORKFLOW and EDRMS" (Annex 12 – Weblog post analysis, p.337).

Having examined what the researcher believes are the limitations of critical research in Section 3.1. Introduction: philosophy, theory and model, the research maintains a level of criticality, in line with Mingers (2004), whilst improving the lot of the practitioners and citizens, when dealing with e-government, at the same time.

5.3. Practical reflections

The research focussed on English local government. The research was in response to what the researcher suspected was haphazard implementation of e-government. Supplementary explorations included official and unofficial reasons for the adoption of e-government, along with the role of politics and Politics – local, national and international.

Kraemer & King (2006, p.12) argue that “claims that E-Government will fundamentally alter government structure, performance, citizen engagement and so on are likely to be dashed”. This is supported by Winner (2005, p.126) who concurs that if decisions don’t demonstrate change as a result of the use of online media, promoting it as a revolutionary influencing mechanism are, at best, rather “premature”. Along with Pina (2010, p.15) who state that ICT’s are “leading to a reinforcement of existing structures, positions and processes rather than enabling the introduction of deliberative democracy mechanisms and new styles of governance”.

The aforementioned statements being at odds with a speech by the UK Prime Minister in March 2010, Brown (2010), where he states:

“Over the period ahead I want to go much further in harnessing the power of technology to refashion the structures and workings of government – delivering efficiencies not simply in the back room; but also looking at how the new technologies can open the door to a reinvention of the core policy-making processes and towards a renewal of politics itself.”

Which is not unlike the definition of e-government from DTLR (2002, p.2) quoted in Section 1.3. Definitions, perhaps indicating the limited progress.

Chadwick (2009, p.40) also has concerns over the contrast between ideals and delivery, in terms of modern social media, asking the question “how can we provide mechanisms that connect the granular information environments of web 2.0 citizen activity with ‘real’ policy-making”. These matters also produce issues

around social exclusion, especially when increasing research efforts are being made to employ social media, along with extracting government policy from it.

As stated above in Section 5.1. Theoretical reflections, e-government is not an end in itself. E-government cannot alter government structures nor can it increase access to government services without the willingness of those in control, it is one agent amongst many, and those other agencies need to be proactively involved in making the changes. This is emphasised by Bourgon in OECD (2008, p.128) when he states that:

“The important point to remember is that *having a vote* is different from *having a say*. Democratic societies guarantee citizens’ right to vote to select their representatives. This right does not imply that people are *given a voice* on matters that interest them most or that they have a role in the decisions that affect them most directly.”

Which directly contradicts many of the assumptions made regarding e-government or e-governance although it does not restrict their ability to comment on matters of service delivery. However, ultimately, there may be change, for as Hacker (2004, p.14) considers “History reveals that there is no democratisation without struggle for such, whether it be offline or online”. How these struggles occur is an area contemplated by Winner (2005, p.133) in his conclusion:

“We cannot leave questions of this kind to eager technology promoters in the private sector; they have obvious conflicts of interest. We can no longer leave such questions solely to elected officials; they are all too often beholden to narrowly defined private interests. And we can no longer respond to crucial world-altering technological developments by channelling the rapture of techno-euphoria; its debilitating effects upon political speech and action are now all too obvious.

Finding ways to involve the public as a whole in processes of deliberation and choice about the dimensions, character and organization of emerging technologies, is an avenue for reform that few political societies have explored. Yet the promise of this political innovation is considerable – creating better technologies for widespread use while cultivating better citizens in the process.”

Whilst Winner may exaggerate the interests of the elected representatives in possibly promoting their private interests, history and common sense teach us that it is all too clear that if a society is to remain a democracy there has to be a clear and open mechanism for communications between those representing and all those represented. Technology may assist in this, but the channels have to be available and accessible to as many within the population as is viable, given the usual constraints over funding and practicality, which may result in some exclusion.

Thus, according to the feedback from this research, there is a need for the creation of feedback mechanisms within political or service delivery, across all the channels available, in order to understand and appreciate what issues there are from the outset. In fact, Pettersson-Lidbom & Tyrefors (2007, p.18) had concluded from research in Sweden that areas employing direct democracy have lower government spending than those using the representative style (there having been an option to utilise either form in some local government). This may be an argument for investigating how direct democracy can be utilized. However, there is also the risk that for a minority in a population, essential services may be cut, because the majority are unwilling to fund them, and this may be the reason for the lower spend. This would then indicate the need for a clear ethical theory around digital inclusion to prevent social exclusion, as considered in 2.5.2. The ethics of digital inclusion and exclusion. The ethical nature of service delivery was not the core element of this research, however, the provision of feedback from citizens to service providers should oblige them to be aware of such issues.

Schellong (2009, p.7) considers the future of international benchmarking when asking “what happens to a metric/measure if the developments in technology make a measure obsolete?” This inquiry may also be made about the channels, and may result in questioning the value of benchmarks when

technology is developing so quickly, unless they are across all channels and allow for channel migration.

One of the key successes in the UK involving e-government, as was repeatedly quoted during interviews, was at the Driver, Vehicle and Licensing Agency (DVLA). It was found that reducing the complexity of forms can also have an effect on the public's willingness to employ them (DVLA 2008, p.9) when a decision was made that "all DVLA forms are being reviewed in order to reduce the number of forms and their complexity and improve their accessibility". This resulted in greater use of electronic forms and reduced the number of clarification telephone calls. The ability to renew Road Fund Licenses online was also provided by linking with other public and private agencies. This saved the applicant posting a bundle of forms to the agency or queuing at a Post Office and is immediately recognized as an improvement. Whilst demonstrating the benefits of e-government, this, more importantly, highlights the need to consider practical service improvements from the citizen's point-of-view and as the London CIO stated "I think we need measures to help us understand, in detail, who the people are that want to transact with us. How they want to and how they are able to transact with us, and then we need to put the access channels – set them up so that they reflect those needs and those abilities."

The chapter has examined electronic government in the context of a number of key theories and how it might work within the political dimension, as well as the standard service delivery one. The study has revealed a number of anomalies. Having considered the research in the context of the major theories I believe provides satisfactory conclusions to the research questions, along with some contradictions. Further elaboration on the conclusions and contradictions are made in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THIS INVESTIGATION INTO ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT

Some of the research outcomes have already been outlined in the forgoing chapters. In concluding the exercise, the researcher is satisfied that he has answered the questions that initially motivated the work. Those answers and any additional remaining ones follow.

6.1. Concluding remarks – beyond e-government

From the forgoing theoretical and practical conclusions it can be seen that a number of different paradigms appear to be operating at the same time, and within spaces that overlap. These paradigms include that of New Public Management (NPM), which originated with theories around neo-liberal market economies from the private sector, and one with the title of electronic government but a much less clear definition. It appears coincidental that electronic government commenced shortly after NPM, whilst some seem to assume that this was natural; however NPM and e-government, even in its most basic form, are more suitably classed as antinomies, since many of the features of NPM, such as outsourcing and fragmented bureaucracy, conflict with the establishment of e-government which requires joined-up and politically managed bureaucracy.

An additional antinomy occurs between that of the model of the citizen as customer, developed within NPM, and the engagement of the citizen in political decision making, seen by some to be facilitated within e-government and the position of citizen as the represented agent within government. This position has further difficulties when it is accepted that we are employing these concepts within a representative democracy, which expects the citizen/customer to elect others to act on their behalf. Although Fung (2006, p.2) argues that direct

participation should not be seen as an alternative to representative democracy, but works best when complementing it.

Whilst these “antinomies of modern government” may have constrained the development of electronic government as proposed by some politicians and envisaged by some citizens, it is practical and possible for the employment of technology to collate and refine collective intelligence (as intimated by Fung above) to develop process and ultimately service improvements, subject to the representative, or similar, government structure, as previously outlined in Section 2.8. Key research questions, and aligned in the tentative theory of parsimonious e-government management, that the establishment of a satisfaction/dissatisfaction metric across all channels will aid the improvement of services over them, including electronic or future ones. However, Hacker (2004, p.17) considered how existing structures may restrict change by inherent contradictions, particularly when structures overlap and sometimes work against each other.

This is actually the case in many countries, especially the UK where there are frequently three tiers of local government, one of regional government, a national government or possibly two (in the case of the devolved administrations), along with various bodies dealing with health, social care, policing and other matters, often on boundaries that cross local government boundaries. These include multiple layers of management, as well as political leadership. Hence the consideration of structuration theory in Section 5.1.1. Structuration theory and Section 5.1.3. Adaptive structuration theory.

As has been discussed in Section 5.1. Theoretical reflections, this complexity of structure can be as relevant in the context of service delivery, as with the political system and cause equivalent challenges when attempting to rationalise services, as it does when attempting to improve political management.

In summary, electronic government is not a singularity; it is also different propositions to different people. Nor is electronic government a silver bullet, a cure-all or other magical solution to government woes, it is purely a service delivery mechanism. The issues that it has been employed to resolve, and in many cases still remain, are those of democratic deficit and process along with government service processes, which need to be resolved before electronic mechanisms can be said to transform government.

The initial phase of electronic government can be seen as “iatrogenic” in that it has created a façade of new service delivery and democratic involvement of the public whilst spending vast sums of money, as was outlined in Section 1.4. History in England onwards of the research. However, the core issues remain and the expenditure requires compensatory savings, thus potentially reducing services and service quality.

Behind all the expenditure on electronic government have been the massed ranks of the consultancies, from which some politicians came and to which some of the politicians will return, or receive retainers from. It may always be that this “e-government” was a lesson the consultants thought government needed to learn.

6.2. Contribution to knowledge

The research provides the first thorough investigation into, and analysis of, the literature on e-government metrics and has opened up the topic and literature to the practitioner community.

This research makes original contributions to knowledge by revealing what the researcher believes to be the most appropriate mechanism for the management and use of e-government, amongst other mechanisms for service delivery in the public sector, especially considering smaller authorities, given the limited number of councils involved overall, although efforts were made to include all types and sizes. The conclusions presented are grounded on data drawn from within the practitioner community and on the basis of research with the practitioners.

Until this research, the main focus for e-government measurement had been on targets or large and complex analyses suitable only for central government. Instead, the research proposes parsimonious measurement. Such measurement, reliant on collating citizen usage and feedback across delivery channels, will be able to improve services and assist channel migration. This had never been examined before.

This parsimonious measurement relies on the collection of qualitative data at a service level by service channel, along with quantitative usage data recorded over time, which will identify issues with service delivery. This, in turn, would recognise and support channel movements as they occurred.

The researcher, having initially trialled a system recording such data over the web channel at his own council, developed a business case (Annex 13) for the use of one across all channels and has now introduced it, along with encouraging the use at neighbouring authorities, who, are now also trialling it. Whilst the application is in use, there is still apprehension by the researcher and some of his colleagues who support the use of the application that there is insufficient corporate will for the kinds of citizen-directed change required to make full use of such a tool. However, as also revealed by the literature, such change can take time.

In the researcher's experience, it can be quite difficult getting service providers within a local authority or government department to accept that improving service delivery requires adequate or suitably signposted information on websites to encourage the citizens to use them as the cheapest route, instead of face-to-face or telephony. The services also need to accept that usable and equitable services will be accessed in a hierarchy of ease, and that whilst the web site may be the source of information, if the transaction is complex, the citizen may then resort to telephone or face-to-face to complete it. Hence the need to refine processes, prior to delivering them via the Internet or contact centre.

However, it is clear from the questionnaires and interviews that a number of local authorities are beginning to employ citizen engagement systems and it will be through such best practice, once accepted within services, that by responding, where practical and productive, to the voices of citizen-customers, efficiency and service will improve, delivering both savings and increased overall satisfaction.

Such an approach opens up wider opportunities. Being equally applicable to all, and parsimonious, it may benefit developing countries where e-government budgets are also limited, and some indications are given of its suitability in such contexts.

Some proponents of e-government stressed the political change that it could bring about (e.g. e-democracy). However, whilst perhaps improving communications, in a system of representative democracy, some of the proposals are (at best) aspirational and would require major changes to the political system, where "professional" politicians would lose much of their power, along with their administrators. Politicians have never denied this conundrum over e-democracy but they have also largely failed to understand e-government as, primarily, a service delivery mechanism.

The delivery of e-government was found to be confused by adopting market approaches to citizens (e.g. by calling them customers) whilst expecting greater public involvement in the political system. Similarly there was an aim of joined-up government, whilst services and ICT were being fragmented or outsourced in line with NPM.

Examining the more general theories potentially involved was revealing. Amongst the relationships between politicians, administrators and citizens, across the various layers of government, and assuaged in the long history of social development, are complex structures. These structures need sensitive handling, which assumptions about e-democracy and efficiencies fail to account for.

Certain recently-developed applications can facilitate recording of feedback and transaction volumes, and whilst varying in complexity and cost, can be tuned to circumstances and the business case for the trial of one such tool is attached at Annex 13. The software concerned has been initially established to gather feedback from individual council website pages, along with face-to-face visitors to the council reception using a touch-sensitive screen with a tightly focused range of questions to extract feedback on the visitor experience. The next step will be to introduce a similar questionnaire as part of the telephone system. However, the main requirement to implement the proposed parsimonious model is a corporate will for cultural change - the need to accept this variant on co-production as a useful tool, the understanding that all channels need to operate sympathetically to each other, and the need for staff supporting the different channels to cooperate.

6.3. Future research directions

There are a number of further research activities identified such as reviewing and analyzing:

- the employment of “avoidable contact” (National Indicator 14) and lessons learned from that, since although it is no longer part of the National Indicator set, there will be something to learn from its introduction
- the range of methods for collecting citizen feedback (for example, one supplier indicated that interactive voice recording had proved unsatisfactory and stopped employing it)
- the use of the various tools being made available by the private sector for collecting feedback
- the additional channels being continually developed and how they fit in and are employed and measured amongst the others
- the continuing debate about focusing on citizens and customers and whether this might impinge on developing any social capital or public value
- This use of feedback might also aid engagement with citizens, which appeared to be a sub-text within electronic government, whilst, in the way it was delivered, was probably unachievable

The researcher, after some struggles, has gained support for an experiment within his own authority, and some neighbours, to use one of the tools to measure satisfaction, and intends to work with the supplier in developing the product and promoting its use. There is, thus, scope for research around that experiment.

It is expected that the research tool, in the form of the weblog will continue (in the longer term) to assist professionals in debating the use of metrics. Ongoing research will continue to stretch across the academic and practitioner boundaries.

6.4. Limitations

A fundamental limitation is that the research scope was local government in England. Whilst any solution proposed might be applicable to a wider audience, this research was unable to examine to what extent that might be. Whether or not such a solution, following testing in the very varied landscape of local government, would be suitable in other countries or different tiers of government cannot be stated at this stage.

One of the major limitations on the research was that whilst there was little activity in the field at its commencement, there was a growing awareness of the issues left outstanding by electronic government during the process, as with the “avoidable contact” measure first proposed in late 2007. This meant that the research was working within a very active and changing field, making it impossible to always be sufficiently flexible to respond to developments in the ideal way³³. The choice of action research as a methodology was even more beneficial than anticipated in this case, providing additional flexibility, along with being able to feedback directly into the practitioner groups.

As represented in Annex 3 - Local Government Functions, some authorities within English local government underwent structural changes from 2008 onwards, with numbers of senior staff losing their posts and ICT departments being restructured. This presented difficulties when contacting staff, along with being consistent when presenting authority numbers between 2008 and 2009. A number of the staff contacted in 2008 found themselves redundant or redeployed due to role changes, some having different responsibilities, along with others being relocated to different offices or authorities. This was an additional reason for not restricting the second questionnaire and the survey to

³³ Thus, for example, different questions would have been asked about NI14 if it had been known at the time that it would be removed from the national indicator set.

those who had responded on the first occasion. The ongoing publicity through the various publications also helped to attract some new respondents.

6.5. What could have been done better

The research had indicated the benefit of an application to record and feedback user satisfaction data across all services and channels to the back office. Despite reasons for thinking that such systems, labelled in this research as Citizen Engagement Systems (or their equivalent) would be in evidence in local government, at the time of the surveys (June 2008 through September 2009) the concept was largely absent from local government, when respondents were asked, perhaps unnecessarily, about them. It may have been possible to identify the lack of such systems by more extensive pre-testing of the instruments, however the survey was only one aspect of the overall research and whilst the systems themselves were absent from the responses, there was some general support for the theory behind them which may indicate their employment may still occur, if somewhat gradually, as a result of spending constraints.

6.6. Implications for researchers

The employment of social media, such as the weblog, as a mechanism for conducting action research had limited literature when the decision was made to employ the weblog, two online questionnaires and a series of interviews on a longitudinal basis for this research. Various studies had been made proposing weblogs as research diaries, and whilst new forms of qualitative research are being encouraged in the social sciences by the likes of Hookway (2008) and Murthy (2008) and the use of action research in information systems by de Vries (2007), the use of such tools and action research in the realm of information systems appeared to be still relatively uncommon. However, having

made a start by using a weblog to host the ethical material as suggested in Denscombe (2005), employing it to 'peer review' ideas amongst the practitioner community appeared to be a logical next step. Wiles, Pain & Crow (2010, p.22) in an analysis of claims regarding the use of innovative methods, found their existence to be actually less well used, whilst stating that "qualitative researchers draw on existing traditions to develop methods and that these developments are articulated in terms of innovation". This may have been the case if solely employing online questionnaires, however the weblog appears to remain a novel practice when extended further than the ethical background and questionnaire host, and into a magnet for research material and potential collaborators. Whilst practitioner feedback, via the weblog or at presentations, may provide limited weight, in this research it is triangulated with the interviews and quantitative data from the questionnaires.

A primary difficulty envisaged by the researcher is the need to deliver intervention and evidence it. In this case, the researcher managed to gain acceptance at his own and some other local authorities that a tool was required to collate citizen feedback across all channels (Annex 13). The researcher, whilst employing one particular tool, of the limited number available, was attempting to avoid advocating any particular application and remain vendor-neutral. Although there were more such tools by the end of the research, they each have variations, that whilst largely aligning with the model, differ in presentation and data collection methods.

One possible implication for other researchers is that whilst this researcher was active within the practitioner community, such involvement may not be possible when the researcher does not have such a network or relatively easy access to one. This would apply not only to the individual practitioners but also to the media and organisations that such a network supports. The Research Information Network (2010, p.49) also warn that pre-publication through social media has to ensure that it "employs means that do not prejudice subsequent

formal publication, and the recognition and assessments that flow from them". However, it is possible that this might work in the researcher's favour by making the widest audience aware of the research, and the approach to it taking place, but this will be most successful if efforts are made regarding publication in both worlds.

There is some indication from this research that action research in a large community, for example a national group of e-government practitioners, is not as manageable as that in a single workplace, even when the researcher employs social media. This is due to the dispersed nature of experience and practice in local government, where the practitioners work in a range of contrasting departments and have very different levels of responsibility. However, as a method of bringing such diverse communities together within a community of practice, advantages were observed, as were expressed in a response to the promotional post for the research on the UK E-Democracy email list in April 2008 "Halle-b****y-lujah! This is an area I've been banging on about / banging against for some time and it is way past time that it was properly addressed across eGov. Metrics are essential tools, as with any website."

6.7. Implications for practitioners

Much of the research has identified the "lipstick on the pig" syndrome where new technology has been added onto the front of an existing and probably aging system, be this bureaucratic, political or technological. In the haste to adopt (and be seen to adopt) new technologies little attention has been paid, until more recently, to the structure and process of government that has created a complex arena for joining up and facilitating services over electronic channels. Practitioners, who were largely aware of this, need to ensure that they stand their ground in future and make those attempting to put lipstick on the pig aware of the nature of the pig. As a respondent to the weblog stated in January 2010:

“High quality web provision and greater shift to the web must be a vital part of councils’ strategies if they are to maintain service levels in a future of budget cuts. Understanding where websites are failing and how to improve them has never been more important.”

An example of this is where an existing application requires outputs from electronic forms received being re-entered into it. This double entry may possibly be avoided by integrating the applications with a piece of “middleware” software if this is found to be financially viable (which it may be if sufficient volumes of data are being transferred). It may further be possible to employ a single piece of “middleware” to handle several different applications.

There is also the fundamental aspect whether the processes surrounding certain services are entirely necessary and whether reducing complexity reduces the need for some forms that might be removed entirely or merged with others. A classic example has been the need to complete a form and provide a signature, which requires the form to be posted. If the form involves no legal obligation then the signature becomes superfluous and the transaction can be entirely electronic.

6.7.1. Citizen engagement systems

Although there is a cost involved in implementing such technologies, in most cases (from the examples identified by the researcher) this is an annual or monthly maintenance one with some initial set-up charges. The software is normally hosted externally to the client site and would fit within the description of ‘Software as a Service’ (SaaS), so requires minimal local involvement apart from corporate and senior managers ensuring feedback is acted up.

There is obviously a high cost in establishing and maintaining websites, contact centres and similar operations, but without a method of comparative tuning of

such facilities there is no comprehension of whether best value is being obtained from them. A citizen engagement system, in combination with good corporate and service management can provide a tool to do this.

The service improvement outcomes from recording (dis)satisfaction are much clearer and easier to record than those that could have been expected from National Indicator 14 (avoidable contact), the experience of which is described in Section 2.3.4. NI14 and observed in, largely negative, feedback to questionnaires (Section 4.2.2. Data analysis of phase 1 of the research and Section 4.3.2. Data analysis of phase 2 of the research, interviews in Section 4.6.2.5. Patchy recording for avoidable contact, along with the weblog (where the feedback had been mostly offline apart from Annex 12 – Weblog post analysis, March 2010). Hence, there is learning from the approach taken to NI14, and unlike it, the service delivery learning needs to be regularly and consistently applied and reported on.

6.8. Lessons learned

There are a large, and increasing, number of weblogs or online communities of practice 'in the wild' which can make it difficult to attract practitioners to find time to read a particular one, although ensuring that it is up-to-date and has relevant information assists. This is demonstrated by the timely provision of comment and information on NI14 (as described in Section 2.3.4. NI14).

Those working in local government receive many surveys and questionnaires, as well as regular requests under the Freedom of Information Act. Few of the non-mandatory ones will receive attention. In the case of this research it was being done by one of their colleagues who was feeding back results into the same community, and still the response was limited. Being involved in range of

networks permitted the researcher to press some colleagues for assistance, which anyone outside those networks or communities would be unable to do!

The researcher came to accept that responses to weblog postings would not be forthcoming in all cases. In fact, on some particular topics that the researcher expected responses, nothing came at all. This was the case with the NI14 guidance and information which produced many visitors and downloads but no comments! This means that any analysis will largely be of the researcher's own contributions. Therefore, a range of approaches to analysis may have to be considered, such as that around search words, most visited pages etc.

There is a need to write weblogs as clear and accurately as possible, avoiding business, trade or academic phraseology, if the intention is to attract a wide readership outside any particular niche profession.

To encourage new readers to view the weblog it was found useful to post responses on other related weblogs or forums, ensuring that a link to the researcher's own weblog was provided!

As in any marketing exercise, which the employment of social media may be viewed as, branding is relevant. The 'Great E-mancipator' has become a known persona for the researcher within the local government community. The same brand has been re-employed across Twitter, Facebook and other social media.

6.9. A response to the general question regarding the success of modern mechanisms of service delivery

From the forgoing it is clear that whilst electronic service delivery has actually occurred, this has generally not had the impact originally expected. The large

investment has provided for web sites and in many cases the electronic application for services. Unfortunately, this has been carried out with limited consultation with potential end users, without the use of measures of achievement and, in most cases, without re-engineering the processes or revision of the back office. From this research electronic government does not appear to have been the 'great emancipator' but has delivered the understanding about and the potential for the emancipation of some aspects of service delivery and policy implementation. The transformation of public service requires consultation along with process and business change to fully arrive at transformational government.

As one interviewee stated "hindsight is a wonderful thing", but without a clear vision of what was expected along with ground rules for delivery, success would always be limited.

From the wider literature, along with a reflective study of and with practitioners, it would appear that employing a parsimonious method of channel measurement, recording citizen feedback and usage, along with employing this when reviewing the end-to-end processes, is able to assist when attempting to provide improved services, particularly across all channels.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Glossary

Antinomy - in philosophy, contradiction, real or apparent, between two principles or conclusions, both of which seem equally justified; it is nearly synonymous with the term paradox.

(<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/28270/antinomy>) – Accessed 11 December 2009

Balanced Scorecard - A concept for measuring whether an organisation's activities are meeting its objectives. It uses both human issues and financial outcomes.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balanced_scorecard) - Accessed 14 February 2008

Crowdsourcing - the act of taking tasks traditionally performed by an employee or contractor, and outsourcing it to a group (crowd) of people or community in the form of an open call.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowdsourcing>) – Accessed 30 October 2009

Democracy –

Deliberative democracy, also sometimes called discursive democracy, is a system of political decision-making that relies on popular consultation to make policy. In contrast to the traditional theory of democracy, in which voting is central, deliberative democracy theorists argue that legitimate lawmaking can arise only through public deliberation. It adopts elements of direct democracy and representative democracy. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliberative_democracy) Accessed 5 June 2010

Direct democracy, classically termed pure democracy, is a form of democracy and a theory of civics in which sovereignty is lodged in the assembly of all citizens who choose to participate. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy) Accessed 5 June 2010

Participatory democracy is a process emphasizing the broad participation of constituents in the direction and operation of political systems. Etymological roots of democracy (Greek *demos* and *kratos*) imply that the people are in power and thus that all democracies are participatory. However, traditional representative democracy tends to limit citizen participation to voting, leaving actual governance to politicians. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_democracy) Accessed 5 June 2010

Representative democracy is a form of government founded on the principle of elected individuals representing the people, as opposed to either autocracy or direct democracy.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representative_democracy) Accessed 5 June 2010

Gestell –A German expression meaning “framing” employed by the philosopher Martin Heidegger to label that which lies beneath or behind modern technology. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestell>) – Accessed 23 February 2010

Historical institutionalism (HI) is a social science method that uses institutions in order to find sequences of social, political, economic behavior and change across time. It is a comparative approach to the study of all aspects of human organizations and does so by relying heavily on case studies. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_institutionalism) - Accessed 14 February 2008

Iatrogenic - The terms iatrogenesis and iatrogenic artefact refer to inadvertent adverse effects or complications caused by or resulting from medical treatment or advice... Causes of iatrogenesis include chance, medical error, negligence, social control. It is used in this thesis to describe an analogous, non-medical phenomenon. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iatrogenic>) – Accessed 16 January 2009

Marketization - is the process that enables the state-owned enterprises to act like market-oriented firms. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marketization>) - Accessed 5 July 2010

Maslow’s hierarchy - a theory in psychology that Abraham Maslow proposed in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*, which he subsequently extended to include his observations of humans’ innate curiosity (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow’s_hierarchy_of_needs) - Accessed 6 June 2008

NI14 (Avoidable contact) – A part of the UK government’s National Indicator set for local government. Defined in DCLG (2008a) as “Reducing avoidable contact: minimising the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer.” Discussed extensively in Section 2.3. Metrics and user satisfaction.

Post-bureaucratic – “a range of ideas developed since the 1980s that specifically contrast themselves with Weber’s ideal type bureaucracy. This may include total quality management, culture management and matrix management, amongst others.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organizational_structure#Post-bureaucratic) – Accessed 29 May 2010

Process variation – the statistical description of natural fluctuations in process outputs. (used in systems thinking) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_process_variation) - Accessed 6 June 2008

Semiotics, also called **semiotic studies** or **semiology**, is the study of sign processes (semiosis), or signification and communication, signs and symbols. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiotics>) Accessed 5 June 2010

Silo - An information silo is a management system incapable of reciprocal operation with other, related management systems. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_silo) - Accessed 14 February 2008

Six Sigma - Six Sigma seeks to identify and remove the causes of defects and errors in manufacturing and business processes. It uses a set of quality management methods, including statistical methods, and creates a special infrastructure of people within the organization ("Black Belts" etc.) who are experts in these methods. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Sigma) – Accessed 10 February 2009

Social Choice Theory – Social Choice Theory is a theoretical framework for measuring individual interests, values, or welfares as an aggregate towards collective decision. It is methodologically individualistic, that is, "bottom-up", in aggregating from individuals to society. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_choice_theory) - Accessed 31 August 2009

Structuration Theory - the theory of structuration holds that all human action is performed within the context of a pre-existing social structure which is governed by a set of norms and/or laws which are distinct from those of other social structures. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Structuration>) - Accessed 10 February 2009

Systems thinking – Systems thinking is a framework that is based on the belief that the component parts of a system will act differently when the systems relationships are removed and it is viewed in isolation. The only way to fully understand why a problem or element occurs and persists is to understand the part in relation to the whole. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systems_thinking) - Accessed 6 June 2008

Weblog - A website that displays in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals and usually has links to comments on specific postings. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/weblog>) - Accessed 14 February 2008
For the purpose of clarity it was decided to standardise on the term 'weblog' for the application, rather than the abbreviation 'blog' and to employ 'blogger' for the author of the 'weblog'.

Annex 2 - Key documents in the history of electronic government in England

DATE	AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	
1996	Cabinet Office Central IT Unit	Government.Direct, Cm. 3438	HMSO	Green Paper
1997	Liam Byrne	Information Age Government: Delivering the Blair Revolution	Fabian Society	
1998	Office of Central Information	Our Information Age	HMSO	
December 1998		Our Competitive Future – building the Knowledge Driven Economy	HMSO	White Paper
March 1999		Modernising Government	TSO	White Paper
July 1999		Modernising Government Action Plan	Cabinet Office	
July 1999		Central Local Information Age Government Concordat		
September 1999	Performance and Innovation Unit	e-commerce@its.best.uk	HMSO	
April 2000	Cabinet Office	Implementing e-government: guidelines for local government		
April 2000	Cabinet Office Central IT Unit	e-Government: a strategic framework for public services in the Information Age	HMSO	
September 2000	Performance and Innovation Unit	e.gov:Electronic Government Services for the 21st Century	Cabinet Office Central IT Unit	
December 2000	Central Local Liaison Group	e-Government: Local Targets for Electronic Service Delivery	DETR	
February		e-Government:	DETR	

2001		Delivering Local Government Online, Milestones and resources for the 2005 target		
March 2001		Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statement guidance	DTLR	
December 2001		Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services	DTLR	White Paper
April 2002		e-gov@local - draft national strategy for local e-government	HMSO - DTLR	
April 2002		e-gov@local – Towards a national strategy for local e-government - Summary	DTLR	
April 2002		Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) 2 statement guidance	DTLR	
November 2003		Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) 3 statement guidance	ODPM	
December 2004		Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) 4 statement guidance	ODPM	
April 2004	Peter Blair	Defining e-government outcomes for 2005 to support the delivery of Priority Services & National Strategy Transformation agenda for local authorities in England – VERSION 1.0	ODPM	
July 2005		Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) 4.5 statement guidance	ODPM	
November 2006	Cabinet Office	Transformational Government – Enabled by Technology – CM6683	HMSO	

December 2005		Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) 5 statement guidance	ODPM	
September 2006	Cabinet Office	Transformational Government - Implementation Plan	HMSO	
April 2006		Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) 6 statement guidance	ODPM	
October 2006	DCLG	Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper	HMSO	
December 2006	Sir David Varney	Service transformation	HMSO	
March 2007	Sir Michael Lyons	Lyons Inquiry into Local Government	HMSO	
October 2007		Comprehensive Spending Review 2007	H.M. Treasury	
October 2007		Service Transformation Agreement	H.M. Treasury	
October 2007		The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities & Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators	DCLG	
October 2007		Delivering Value for Money in Local Government: meeting the challenge of CSR07	DCLG	
November 2007		National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of definitions - Draft for Consultation	DCLG	
February 2008		National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of definitions	DCLG	

March 2008		National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions	DCLG	
April 2009	HM Treasury	Operational Efficiency Programme: final report	HM Treasury	
June 2009	Department for Culture, Media and Sport Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	Digital Britain, Final Report Cm 7650	The Stationery Office	
August 2009	Cabinet Office	Channel Strategy Guidance Part 1: Modules Part 2: Case Studies	Cabinet Office	
December 2009	Cabinet Office	Putting the Frontline First: smarter government CM 7753	The Stationery Office	
January 2010	Cabinet Office	UK Government ICT Strategy	Cabinet Office	
March 2010	HM Treasury	Total Place: A whole area approach to public services	The Stationery Office	
March 2010	DCLG	Smarter Government	The Stationery Office	

Annex 3 - Local Government Functions

Council Type	2008	2010
English County Councils	34	27
London Borough Councils	33	33
Metropolitan Borough Councils	36	36
English District Councils	238	202
English Unitary Councils	46	55
TOTAL	387	353

County Councils generally have responsibility for strategic planning, highways, traffic, social services, education, libraries, fire, refuse disposal and consumer protection.

District Councils run local planning, housing, environmental health, markets and fairs, refuse collection, cemeteries, crematoria, leisure services and parks, tourism and electoral registration.

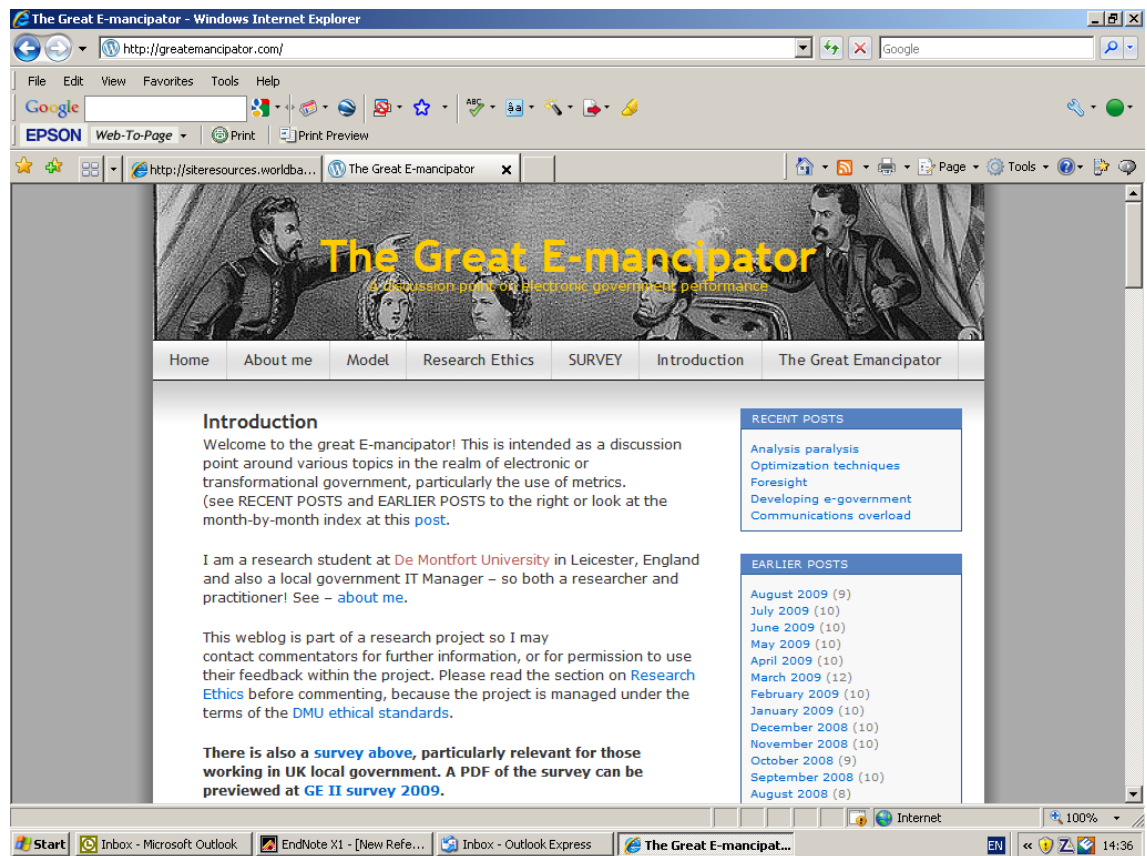
London / Metropolitan / Unitary Councils are all single-tier authorities and run all services in their area. They also have joint authorities to run wider services in their conurbation such as fire and civil defence.

Responsibilities	County	London	Metropolitan	District	Unitary
Education	•	•	•		•
Housing		•	•	•	•
Planning Applications		•	•	•	•
Strategic Planning	•	•	•		•
Transport Planning	•	•	•		•
Passenger Transport	•				•
Highways	•	•	•		•
Fire	•	•	•		•
Social Services	•	•	•		•
Libraries	•	•	•		•
Leisure		•	•	•	•
Waste Collection		•	•	•	•
Waste Disposal	•	•	•		•
Environmental Health		•	•	•	•
Collection of Revenue		•	•	•	•
Electoral Administration		•	•	•	•

Extracted from the Municipal Year Book Online© Hemming Group Ltd 2002.

Annex 4 – Research Instruments

Annex 4.1. The Weblog



Annex 4.2. The Great E-mancipator syndicated into a national web site



Annex 4.3. Survey 2008

The Great E-mancipator - e-government research - survey 1/2008

This is a study about electronic government, which is intended to benefit all users. It is also a part of my
The research is intended to gain knowledge of e-government metrics and processes, along with finding out how
It should only take 5 minutes to complete, at the most...

More about the Great E-mancipator project, including the research ethics, can be found at: <http://greatemanci>

Many thanks for your assistance,

Mick Phythian

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Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility
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1(a). What channels does your organization use for customer contact? i.e. what media do you do business with the public over

- ☐ In person
- ☐ By post/letter
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Fax
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Messaging (SMS)
- ☐ e-forms
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ other Online
- ☐ Digi TV
- ☐ other (please describe in the comments 1(b) below)

1(b). Comments Describe any other media you use or other comments



2(a). Which channels is your organization measuring the use of? i.e. which channels have their usage audited and recorded?

- ☐ In person
- ☐ by post/letter
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Fax
- ☐ e-Mail
- ☐ Messaging/SMS
- ☐ e-forms
- ☐ Internet

- ☐ other Online
- ☐ Digi-TV
- ☐ other (please describe in 2 (b) below

2(b) Comments Describe any other media you use and record or other comments

3(a). Is your organization measuring satisfaction with any channels? Please identify any channels where customer satisfaction is currently being measured.

- ☐ In person
- ☐ By post/letter
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Fax
- ☐ e-Mail
- ☐ Messaging/SMS
- ☐ e-Forms
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ other Online
- ☐ Digi-TV
- ☐ other (please describe in the comments 3(b) below

3(b). Comments Describe any other media you use where satisfaction is measured, or other comments

4(a). Is your organization measuring 'avoidable contact' (National Indicator 14) for any channels? NI14 is currently defined as 'the proportion of contacts within key service areas that are a poor use of customer and officer time.

- ☐ In person
- ☐ by post/letter
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Fax
- ☐ e-Mail
- ☐ Messaging/SMS
- ☐ e-Forms
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ other Online
- ☐ Digi-TV
- ☐ other (please describe in the comments 4(b) below

4(b). Comments Describe any other media you use where NI14 is being measured, or other comments

5. How are you measuring usage? A brief description please of what mechanisms you are employing to measure usage?

6. Do you believe 'satisfaction' is a viable measurement? Please comment whether you do or don't believe it, with a consideration of how, or what to measure instead. It may be that public value, social capital or economic benefit can also be considered?

7. What scale do you believe that 'satisfaction' could or should be measured upon? e.g. 1 to 10, satisfaction .v. dissatisfaction, very satisfied through very dissatisfied, 1 through 7 or a different scale for another suggested measure?

8. Do you believe 'avoidable contact' (National Indicator 14) is a useful or viable metric? Avoidable contact or NI14 is currently (March 2008) defined as 'the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer'

9. Participant name Name and/or email address

10. Organization Name of council or other body you work for

May I quote you in my research?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If not, may I quote you but only anonymously? If you request, the information you provide can be considered confidential, except that with your permission anonymised quotes may be used. If you request confidentiality, beyond anonymised quotes, information you provide will be treated only as a source of background research, alongside book and web-based material.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please confirm that you have read the covering text (further details at <http://greatemancipator.wordpress.com>) and are aware of the study and that excerpts may be used in a dissertation or possible papers to come from it and that you have been advised that you may withdraw at any time. If you

request, the information you provide can be considered confidential, except that with your permission anonymised quotes may be used.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would you be willing to answer further questions or be interviewed in the future? The research is an ongoing project for the next few years and further questions are expected to arise

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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Report for: Great E-mancipator 2009 [ID: 33]

A brief survey of e-government and possible metrics

The survey has upto sixteen questions and may take up to ten minutes to finish. Please ensure you answer all required questions (*) and submit the form, otherwise the system may list those questions missed and clear any optional check box questions.

ID Req'd Public Content

			Please confirm that you have read the covering text (further detail at http://greatemancipator.com) and are aware that excerpts may be used in a dissertation or papers to come from it and that you have been advised that you may withdraw at any time. If you request, the information you provide can be considered confidential, except that with your permission anonymised quotes may be used.
1	749	Yes	Yes
2	750	Yes	Yes
			What channels does your organization use for citizen contact? i.e. through which media do you do business with the public.
	2359		in person
	2360		by post/letter
	2361		telephone
	2362		fax
	2363		email
	2364		messaging (SMS)
	2365		e-forms
	2366		Internet
	2367		other Online
	2368		Digital TV
	2369		other (please describe in 3. below)
3	751	No	Yes
			Comments: Describe any other channels/media you use or add other comments.
4	752	No	Yes
			What channels is your organization measuring the use of i.e. which channels have their usage audited and recorded?
	2370		in person
	2371		by post/letter
	2372		telephone
	2373		fax
	2374		e-mail
	2375		messaging/SMS
	2376		e-forms
	2377		Internet
	2378		other online
	2379		Digital-TV
	2380		other (please describe in 5. below)
5	753	No	Yes
			Comments: Describe any other media you use and record, and other comments.
			Is your organization measuring "avoidable contact" (National

6	754	Yes	Yes	Indicator 14) for any or all channels? NI 14 is defined as "the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer."
7	756	Yes	Yes	If your organization is measuring "avoidable contact" (National Indicator 14) please indicate which channels you are measuring over? 2381 in person 2382 by post/letter 2383 telephone 2384 fax 2385 e-mail 2386 messaging/SMS 2387 e-forms 2388 Internet 2389 other online 2390 Digital-TV 2391 other (please describe in 8. below)
8	757	No	Yes	Comments: Describe any other media you use where NI14 is being measured, or other comments.
9	758	No	Yes	If you are using a CRM (customer relationship management) system, CES (customer engagement) system, specific application, spreadsheet etc to measure NI 14 please indicate. 2392 CRM 2393 CES 2394 Specific application - please name in 10. below 2395 Spreadsheet 2396 manual system 2397 Other - please describe in 10. below
10	759	No	Yes	Comments: Describe/name any specific application employed to measure NI 14, or other comments.
11	760	No	Yes	For which services is National Indicator 14 being recorded? 2398 All services 2399 Services listed in the CLG Handbook of Definitions/IDeA Guidance 2400 A list of services agreed within the authority 2401 Not collecting 2402 !other
12	761	Yes	Yes	Are you feeding back the results of avoidable contact/NI 14 to the service areas for improvement purposes?
13	762	No	Yes	Where is the information fed back to and what action is taken?
14	763	Yes	Yes	Is your organization measuring satisfaction or dissatisfaction with any channels?
15	765	No	Yes	Please identify any channels where citizen (dis)satisfaction is currently being measured. 2403 in person 2404 by post/letter 2405 telephone 2406 fax

			2407	e-mail
			2408	messaging/SMS
			2409	e-forms
			2410	Internet
			2411	other Online
			2412	Digital-TV
			2413	other (please describe in 16 below)
16	766	No	Yes	Comments: Describe any other media/channels you use where (dis)satisfaction is measured, or provide other comments.
17	767	No	Yes	If your organization is measuring satisfaction, what systems or mechanisms are you employing?
			2414	Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system
			2415	Customer Engagement System (CES)
			2416	Web interface
			2417	Standalone program
			2418	Manual system
			2419	Other - please provide detail in 18. below
18	768	No	Yes	Comments: describe any other system or mechanism you use to measure satisfaction/dissatisfaction or provide other comments.
19	770	Yes	Yes	Participant name or email address
20	771	No	Yes	Organization - name of council or other body you work for
21	772	Yes	Yes	May I quote you by name in my research?
22	774	Yes	Yes	If you request, the information you provide can be considered confidential, except that with your permission anonymised quotes may be used. If you request confidentiality, beyond anonymised quotes, information you provide will be treated as a source of background research, alongside book and web-based material. Therefore, may I quote you but only anonymously?
23	775	Yes	Yes	The research is an ongoing project for the next few years and further questions are expected to arise. Would you be prepared to contribute further to this research in the future?

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Annex 4.5. Interview questions 2010

There are seven key questions, with a few subsidiary ones, in some cases, but the whole interview should take between five and thirty minutes depending upon responses and pauses.

- Do you believe any particular issues resulted from the way electronic government was brought in from the year 2000 onwards in the UK?
 - If so, what and why?
- Do you believe take-up of electronic services by the public has been low, moderate or high?
 - What do you mean by low/moderate/high?
 - Do you think it could it have been done differently
- Is it practical for metrics or measures to be used to guide multi-channel service delivery?
 - What measures or metrics do you believe public services could or should employ to improve services across all channels, to the end user?
 - Has the government proposed any practical solutions?
- Whilst at least eight channels are regularly reported to be used, there is still a low level of recording of usage – why do you think this is?
 - Multi-channel recording or customer engagement systems are becoming common in the private sector, why not in the public sector, or are they?
- According to my surveys there hasn't there been a systematic use of cross-channel recording for avoidable contact (NI14) – why do you think this is the case?
- Would you say that it is more appropriate to call the users of government services “citizens” or “customers”?
 - Would you, or would you not, consider a difference between the private-sector styled ‘customer’ and the ‘citizen’ when establishing a service delivery strategy?

- Do you believe that electronic delivery of services, generally, is cheaper or more expensive end-to-end than other channels of delivery? If so, why and by what proportion?
 - Should services should be delivered equally and evenly across all channels or whether cheaper channels (for the deliverer) should be focused upon when establishing a service delivery strategy?
 - Do you believe it's fair to all citizens to focus on electronic channels?

Annex 4.6. Interview ethical approval 2010

Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility
School of Technology,
De Montfort University
The Gateway, LEICESTER, LE1 9BH

e: mickp@dmu.ac.uk

This is a request for you participate in a study about electronic government, which is intended to benefit all users. It is a part of my research at De Montfort University in Leicester.

The research is intended to gain knowledge of e-government metrics and processes, along with finding out how different organisations have measured e-government and ultimately communicating this knowledge to a wider audience through publications and presentations

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and in this instance will involve a brief questionnaire.

You may decide not to answer any of the questions. You may also decide to withdraw from this study at any time but please advise me. I may ask for clarification of points some time after, but you are not obliged in any way to clarify or participate further. Beyond that, I will not seek any further contact with you about this unless you agree.

If you request, the information you provide can be considered confidential, except that with your permission anonymised quotes may be used. If you request confidentiality, beyond anonymised quotes, information you provide will be treated only as a source of background research, alongside book and web-based material.

If you request, your name or any other personal identifying information will not appear in the dissertation or any publications resulting from this study; neither will there be anything to identify your place of work or business.

Notes collected during this study will be retained for the duration of the research, plus five years after completion, in a secure location and then destroyed, if requested. The information gained will only be used for the objectives stated and will not be used for any other purpose nor will be recorded in excess of what is required.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study (unless you mention issues of illegality), but there is no intention of doing this!

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information please contact me at any time.

I can further assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by the University ethical research body.

Please confirm by completing and signing the form overleaf.

Yours,



Mick Phythian

I have read the letter about a study being conducted by Mick Phythian for research at De Montfort University.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions related to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am also aware that excerpts from the research may be included in a dissertation and possible papers to come from it. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

	Yes	No
You may quote me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You may quote me, but	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> anonymously
You may reveal my identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Annex 5 – Responses to the use of satisfaction as a measure in 2008 survey

6. Do you believe 'satisfaction' is a viable measurement?
yes it can work. it can be skewed by recent events, so some statistical 'smoothing' may be necessary. other measures you suggest may be valid, but: how would they be measured; are people now interested in public value, for example? My personal opinion is that most people want a solution for themselves, now.
If Systems Thinking were properly understood, then there would be no need for NI 14. See Deming thread in IDeA.
Yes we use a product called Gov Metric
Trouble is we know it's not primarily affected by direct experience of service, may be as much to do with recent media coverage. Also skewed by experience of other providers e.g. central London residents may be v happy with local council for parks provision even though most central London parks are run by Royal Parks Agency.
It is a view we try to measure - it encompasses the whole customer experience of an interaction.
I believe satisfaction is a viable measure but only if carefully defined. So, for example it would be fairly meaningless to ask about satisfaction with a channel; it is satisfaction with the service overall that is important.
Measurable but probably not very meaningful, as it depends on the customer's expectations which are often too low, and also on whether we give them what they want (which with many services may not be the right thing to do). I don't understand the ideas of public value or social capital well enough to know whether they offer workable alternatives, although they sound attractive in principle.
What creates satisfaction? Getting what you need/want in the way you need/want/expect it! Satisfaction can be used to test that Councils are achieving their purpose, but does not itself measure how well they are doing this, especially when they concentrate only on the 'soft' questions. If you are getting it right people will generally be happy (although they may express this simply as being satisfied, rather than singing your praises from the roof-tops). What should be measured is how well a service meets its purpose for the customer; get this right and satisfaction, value for money and all the rest should begin to fall into place.
it is a viable measure, as it indicates perceived public value
Measuring satisfaction for specific service requests is useful in planning. Measuring satisfaction with the Council in general is of little value.
Online, it really depends on how you measure. Post-completion or other sorts of online surveys are always likely to produce bias. I would suggest that metrics used in industry which measure behavior are far better at discovering true satisfaction.
Satisfaction is a measure. It would be helpful if there was a standard questionnaire and definitions that everyone used. I wonder if any of the

toolkits have done this already
Customer satisfaction can be hard to define as well as assess, eg the actual delivery of the service, the customer's perception of that service/quality in absolute terms and also against their expectations of what it should be. But these are still valid measures - just need contextualising and being sure you know which element you're measuring and comparing against.
If you care about something you should have some way of measuring it. The measurement may well be indicative rather than precise. There's a danger in pretending that precise measurements are more accurate than indicative ones when in reality they are just fudges dressed up to look like fine measurement. There's nothing wrong with indicative measures, so long as you don't try to read into them more than they warrant.
Satisfaction is not a "satisfactory" measure. Is influenced by so many factors. Provides empirical guide. Rise in particular channel use demonstrates to some extent a client preference. Necessary to analyse that shift when it is observed.
Not really, if you ask someone how satisfied they are they will probably say they are not!
It can be, but may need a service-specific definition. Self reported satisfaction should never be the sole means of assessing overall customer satisfaction with a service. Satisfaction with service procured needs to be separated from satisfaction with means & method of delivery for the service for the data to have valuable messages to bring to service improvement, whether continuous or one-off reviews. Public value, social capital & economic benefit should definitely be considered, but we may be some way away from this, and the cost of collecting the information at public expenses needs to be weighed against the potential valuable uses of the information.
Clearly satisfaction is subjective, but a simple approach has some value as a measurement. In the Govmetric reporting we just use "good", "average" and "poor" as descriptors together with standard "smiley face" symbols. People understand this and it seems to work well. We will run with this system for at least 12 months (we started at the beginning of 2008) until we consider anything more complex.
I am sceptical about measuring 'satisfaction', especially any idea of aggregating satisfaction data and taking decisions based on it. As John Seddon says all customers put their own nominal value on services, will judge them accordingly and Council services should aim to deliver according to that nominal value.
Something around this is as we need to know whether the process was 'satisfactory' from the customer perspective, could they find what they needed and did they find it easy to use.
Yes
Yes, it is, provided sample rates and methods are correct.

I do not beleive most councils can manage this themselves, however, as the survey process is more specialised than most recognise. (worked for 10 years in a research and survey department of central gov)
I think it can be effective if kept to a simple scale and repeated regularly. In depth, it is only useful for specific service areas rather than general.
It is better to ask for a rating of a servcie out of ten and then ask what would have needed to happen for you to rate it ten? You learn about the customers' nominal values.
Yes, but needs to seen as a 'snapshot' and considered alongside other forms of customer intelligence available within services. Its important to try to separate how people feel about our services to how they feel about the local authority as an institution. In terms of addressing this, we need to understand the drivers of satisfaction i.e. what are the things that make the greatest difference to the greatest number of customers.
Avoidable contact is not a viable measurement. Satisfaction is a useful indicator in some areas, but its value may be over-rated, especially in regulatory areas. Most useful measures are actual take-up statistics and contact volumes e.g. e-payments (especially Direct Debits), volume of correspondence, phone calls etc.
I believe you can only estimate satisfaction - not measure it. Satisfaction is relative and not absolute unless a series of benchmark judgements is provided such as "My query has/has not been resolved", "I am happy/not happy with the outcome", "This matter has/has not been dealt with within the published time period".
Satisfaction' is extremely subjective and while this may have a place, I'm keen to look at other measurements which are more concrete in nature.
Yes it can be if it is very clear to you and the customer what it is specifically you are measuring their satisfaction of. In my experience local authority customers interpret "Service" very differently to what we call it.
Yes within reason i.e. as long as not taken too seriously.
"Satisfaction" in this context is a concept of a complete short term response to a customer request. In these terms the completeness of the response can be measured. However due to the disparity of size and complexity of the individual requests it is difficult to produce a true and accurate measurement. Similarly the circumstance and type of customers also play a large part in benchmarking any results. As long as what is measured is constant (time, cost, qulaity)then the measurement is valid else it becomes something that is only indicative.
Yes, as long as it is measured consistently and users understand that other factors may influece this measure.
Satisfaction with contact is a viable measurement. If I had the power over the overall finances of the Council and Government I would invest in attempting to resolve some of the big problems which would hopefully remove the "need" for the Council, perhaps make the Council redundant in that "wants" could be facilitated through other partners.

Measuring satisfaction can be misleading if the customer is not clear on whether they are being asked to comment on an effective front office interaction or the actual provision of the service by the back office or both. Customer expectation plays a part.

Annex 6 – Communications with software developers

Date	Company	Product	Feedback
17 July 2007	rol	GovMetric	Met company director Nic Streatfield at Leicester railway station to discuss research proposal. After a fruitful discussion around measurement and targets, Nic offered access to the range of anonymised data produced by their system.
July 2008	Business web Software	Connectedcustomer	Following correspondence with Sales Executive and Sales Manager changes to their literature were produced after indicating misconceptions and incorrect NI14 definition on weblog
14 November 2008	CMetrix	MavisNet	In response to link to weblog: "Excellent web site. I should have recognised your name as I was only reading your postings a few weeks back. It looks like we share some common ground as regards customer satisfaction
20 November 2008	Opal Response	Opal Response	In response to link to weblog: "This is a really useful viewpoint for me to get my head round. Thanks for this. I will circulate it around our senior management too."
1 December	IIZUKA		I am intrigued by your research topic because

2008			we have been doing our own research and I would like to obtain your response to the stuff we have produced and discuss your own findings so far.
1 December 2008	Rostvm		Thanks for listing us on your site and getting in touch. In fact we were aware of your site from a recent Google recommendation.
18 February 2009	SSMRT Ltd	CouncilTracker.com	Just wanted to touch base as I haven't heard from you about CouncilTracker.com. Can I send you a log in for you to have a play with the system?
26 May 2009	Codeshed.co.nz		Just wanted to say that your blog site is excellent; a lot of reading and links. I am finding trying to get a grip on e-government quite overwhelming at the moment – so many initiatives from so many levels, so blogs like yours that aggregate some information are invaluable.

Annex 7 – Significant dates in research

Date	Event
14 April 2008	Launch of Great E-mancipator weblog and survey
26 Sept 2008	Conference paper at Ethicomp 2008
9 Oct 2008	Presentation at ESD-Toolkit meeting
11 Nov 2008	Presentation at EiP conference
14 April 2009	Phase 2 survey launch
29 June 2009	Conference paper at ECEG 2009
Dec 2009 – March 2010	Phase 3 interviews
15 April 2010	Conference paper at Ethicomp 2010

Annex 8 – Responses to question about where the ‘avoidable contact’ (NI14) information is fed back in 2009 survey.

Included within the plan to enhance the customer services centre which covers telephone, web and face to face services
Not sure
The service areas that are involved in measuring NI14 are actively involved in monitoring their own back offices and committed to sharing their results cross council and sharing actions/solutions.
To heads of service who are being required this financial year to develop action plans to deal with any NI14 issues raised in their service
Initially to individual service heads and (collectively) to our Management Board.
N/A
Nothing as yet , just started
Discussed at Customer Strategy Board... action should be taken (not sure it is yet)
Current only the total level of avoidable contact fed back to SMT for CAA purposes
This is still in its infancy and only being measured for limited contacts through our new customer contact centre. It's too early to comment.
Transformation team will be using the information to trigger improvement work - resource to do this is limited
To the relevant service unit and their implementation of improvement is monitored via business plans
Currently being analysed, and initially reported via Corporate Management Team and to service managers.
Service areas
Feed-back is to individual Assistant Directors and our Corporate Improvement Group - both on a limited basis, as some managers are more engaged than others. So far actual action as a result has been limited.
Primarily through a pilot service area
well not that I've seen, anyway

Annex 9 – Ethicomp 2008 Paper Abstract

Measuring up to e-government, a view from the shelves.

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Dr R.G Howley, rgh@dmu.ac.uk, 0116 207 8268

De Montfort University, Leicester, U.K.

Abstract

This paper considers the introduction of electronic government in England through the lens of a local government practitioner. The researchers have reviewed the literature and extracted areas for further investigation, at the same time providing feedback from an early phase of an action research project that is seeking lessons from the experiences of those working in the field (or areas where there might be parallels). It outlines how the research will critically review the lessons to assist current and future developments in service delivery assisted by information and communication technologies by providing examples of suitable metrics to employ. The initial research instruments are established through: <http://greatemancipator.com>.

Annex 10 – ECEG 2009 Paper Abstract

Developing Measures of E-government Progress Using Action Research

M.J.Phythian, Dr N.B.Fairweather, Dr R.G Howley

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Abstract (497 words)

From the mid 1990's onwards governments around the world set targets for the number and type of services to be delivered by electronic means but little appeared to have been done about measuring the quality or usage of the methods of delivery. Work by the researchers set out to confirm whether this was the case and in the process try to uncover or develop useful metrics.

The research process envisaged a number of sequential steps with some parallel background work. Initially the work consisted of an in-depth review of the literature covering service delivery in the public and private sectors, the politics and rationale behind e-government and whether any attempts were being made to measure quality and usage from the citizen's perspective. The second step was to generate a brief online questionnaire (less than fifteen questions) for practitioners in the field. In parallel, a weblog was created to promote ideas that were revealed during the course of the literature review and from feedback collected at meetings or events. The weblog also linked to the questionnaire and provided background information about the research, including the ethical guidelines used. The intention was to establish active interest in the potential solutions, whilst maintaining dialogue around the rationale for doing the research. The lead author, who is also working in the field of e-government, is employing the blog, along with giving conference and interest group presentations to promptly feed back into the community of practitioners any learning, which demonstrates the action research approach through its cycles of investigation, analysis, reporting and (hopefully) changed behaviour..

Surveys were completed by individuals from a range of local authorities in the initial four months of the project. The researcher gained an increasing profile for the research by maintaining the blog and promoting it regularly. However, this did reveal reluctance by many to enter into a public dialogue, although responses were to be obtained offline, face-to-face, or through other channels. The researcher used conference presentations to gather instant feedback from practitioners regarding metrics identified in the literature, survey and blog. The responses confirmed the researchers' suspicions about the lack of metrics for both quality and usage, the need for them and the possibility of using citizen satisfaction as one.

This research shows that the iterative Action Research approach is a viable methodology when developing systems that require input from a large population of practitioners to test viability. This form of research also enabled the researchers to feed learning into the practitioner community much quicker than is usually possible.

Annex 11 – Ethicomp 2010 Paper Abstract

Employing Social Media as a Tool in Information Systems Research

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Dr R.G Howley, rgh@dmu.ac.uk, 0116 207 8268

De Montfort University, Leicester, U.K.

Abstract

This paper examines how phenomena that are frequently called social media can be employed in information systems research. The paper describes social media and the issues underpinning the decision to develop and employ a number of those tools in a research project investigating the use of electronic services by UK government, along with feedback on others considered but not employed. The paper then describes the outcomes and benefits of using social media, along with the downsides, and some questions to be further researched. The primary conclusion is the improvement in turnaround time for feedback from academic research into the practitioner community.

Annex 12 – Weblog post analysis

Title		Citizen	Customer Satisfaction	E-government	Engagement	Metrics	Systems thinking	NI14	Social media	Uncategorized	Transformational change	Feedback
December 2007												
National Indicator 14 - avoidable contact - this was the first draft!							X	X				
Measure for measure - a look at metrics internationally						X						
World Wide Web Consortium - some new reports												
January 2008												
Satisfaction Canadian Style - a look at some of the excellent Canadian work						X		X				
Satisfaction is high on the agenda - publications from the LGA, NCC and New Statesman			X									
Irish Lessons - a report from Ireland						X						
February 2008												
NI14 - the drama continues - version 2 of the draft national standard!						X		X				
March 2008												
NI14 version 3 and a homage to Catalonia - NI14 version 3 and a report back from a Spanish-flavoured conference						X		X				
Wanting what the customer wants - NWEFG report on			X			X		X				

citizen need												
Public Value, Social Capital & other fun metrics - a trawl through the terminology!		X			X							
Customer Unfocused - excellent Richter & Cornford paper		X			X	X						Good Layout and design. I like your blog. I just added your RSS feed to my Google News Reader. .
Delivering Efficiency - a new DCLG report		X			X	X						
April 2008												
Is there a public service ethic? Some academic views		X			X							Thanks for pointing out Prof. Fountain's article. She is absolutely right — there is, and must be, a public service ethic. The idea that public servants play an important role in “developing the democratic ideal,” as you write, is one of the animating forces behind the drive to build the U.S. Public Service Academy, which would be the civilian counterpart to the military service academies. You and your readers should check it out: http://www.uspublicserviceacademy.org .
Great E-mancipator survey as PDF - for those who can't Google!		X			X	X						
Customer Need and Public Service - philosophy gets dragged in!		X				X						
A Theory of Parsimonious E-government Management - the theory!		X	X		X	X						Is “satisfied”, a satisfactory service, the limit of our ambition? Of course it may be a challenge even to get to that, but it seems to me

												<p>you would ideally want to get beyond it, to something like excellent or “delighted”.</p> <p>I have (once!) been asked to rate my satisfaction with a service from 1 (bad) to 10 (good), and then asked “if we didn’t score 10, what would it take to get us there?”. That maybe sends a more positive message than “if you’re just about satisfied, that’s good enough for us”. It might also throw up some new ideas for improvement.</p> <p>And about steering the public to cheaper channels – surely you need an element of that? Improvements don’t usually come for free, and budgets are finite, so if you don’t realise some savings, sooner or later you have to settle for something less than excellence.</p>
14th April 1865 - why and what the Great Emancipator		X	X		X							
Annual Research Report - what it says on the label!		X	X		X		X					
Feeding back - from the launch of the SURVEY		X	X		X							
History repeating itself - my abstract for Ethicomp 2008 at Mantua, Italy			X		X		X					
Satisfaction? Responding to Pete - a dialogue develops		X	X		X							<p>I didn’t mean to suggest that scoring from 1-10 is better than just satisfied/ dissatisfied; rather that it</p>

											targets stops you improving as much as you could, so you should have faith in his approach to deliver dramatic improvements without trying to say how large they'll be. That doesn't sit comfortably with a management approach that believes in business plans and demonstrable pay-back either, but at least the pilot project may be able to demonstrate pay-back reasonably quickly.
Re: Pete but not a repeat - a response to a comment		X	X		X		X				
E-government bulletin - a piece published in the same communication		X	X		X		X				
May 2008											
Public value and satisfaction - Mark H Moore		X	X		X		X				
Channel migration - response to another comment			X		X						
Targets, metrics and dissatisfaction - what happens when citizens aren't happy?		X	X		X		X				
Initial feedback to Great E-mancipator survey - a summary!		X	X		X		X				My particular interest at the moment is to understand actual examples of how sucessful (or otherwise!) channel migration has been. I am particularly interested in migration from telephone to the web.
Systems thinking, control charts and philosophy - more philosophy and history		X	X		X						

A summary of some recent posts on the UK e-democracy network - what it says		X	X		X							
June 2008												
Why government IT fails - a link to an article			X		X							
Change and channels - a comment from Glyn Evans			X		X					X		
Satisfaction - another meeting		X	X			X						
Customer insight - an online conference - with the Cabinet Office		X	X			X						Great post. I will read your posts frequently. Added you to the RSS reader.
Systems thinking, balanced scorecards and satisfaction - they can work together		X			X	X						
Scorecards, systems, Canada and Australia - examining thinking		X	X							X		
Customer What? - a debate with cabinet Office		X	X		X	X				X		
Old Whine in New Bottles - picking up on PINpoint from the IPF		X	X		X					X		
Feedback from Brendan - a blogger at the IPF		X	X		X					X		
Yardsticking! - better than benchmarks		X	X		X	X						
July 2008												
Computer Weekly blog awards - I'm shortlisted!			X		X							
NI14 Guidance released - from the IDeA		X	X			X						
NI14 - the new moneypit for suppliers			X		X	X						
Tail wagging dog - another go at NI14		X	X		X	X						
Bread and circuses - customers versus citizens		X	X		X							
Some of July's literature findings		X	X		X							

Customer first! - findings on NI14 from the north east		X	X				X			X		
A month by month guide to what's been blogged	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
August 2008												
IDeA NI14 Guidance and GovMetric		X	X		X		X					
Channel usage and strategy - updating my thoughts!		X	X		X							
Customer insight guidance - what's happening at the IDeA		X	X		X		X				X	
Semantics, semiotics and sophistry - having been told once too many times 'its all semantics.'		X	X		X							
Citizen oriented architecture - A new name for the model!	X	X	X									
Which community - which communities are you a member of in your neighbourhood?										X		
Computer Weekly blog awards - the sad news...					X				X			
Inclusive transformation - a report from EURIM sounds positive!		X	X		X						X	
September 2008												
Researching Local Government, Web 2.0 and Service-oriented architecture - the future (perhaps?)			X								X	The presidential campaigns used new tools in their strategies to engage people. The financial manager and their staffs need to become familiar with these new tools and incorporate them into their strategies. The major change required for these new tools is that finance must be more proactive rather than reactive, with results examined in real time.

											these tools with people all across the country, many of whom never met face-to-face, then why can't government finance do the same?
Conference call! - presenting research in London		X	X		X						
The Invisible Hand? - mashups or intelligent agents?		X	X								
Further feedback to the invisible hand - some comments!		X	X							X	
Between rocks and hard places - invisible hand versus data security			X							X	
The Public Office - a new Whitehall novelty		X								X	
Rock on Canada - reading Canadian e-government	X		X	X						X	
So, what's the vision? - employing experience	X	X	X	X	X						<p>Here's a thought from working on providing customer service solutions in both the public and private sector.</p> <p>I think that it's difficult for the public sector to use the work of folk like Merholz successfully. Essentially this is because the public sector, especially Local Government has a much more difficult job than private sector enterprises because of the multiple relationships that a local authority (say) has with the people it serves.</p> <p>Any one "customer" (a dangerous term because</p>

											Another problem that the public sector has is that the public isn't always clear about the scope of services – their pre-conceptions about what public sector services do (or should do) is a heavily conditioning factor in setting their expectations, and the setting of these expectations is only partly under the control of the individual public agency.
Measuring what matters! - Australia adopts the Canadian CMT	X	X	X		X						
The 'invisible hand' writes on... - more thoughts on XML and its uses			X		X						<p>I posted a few weeks ago (in english and french) on http://europa-eu-audience.typepad.com/en/2008/07/institutions-ha.html</p> <p>I agree that the govs have to disseminate their chunks of information and allow a free reuse</p> <p>RSS feeds based on thematic search must be the source of this re use material</p> <p>I try to promote this idea at EU level</p> <p>Regards</p> <p>-----</p> <p>You're central point I suspect is right – the citizen doesn't care where the data comes from. But I don't know.</p>

flawed - the Chester model												
What do we do about sharing data? - the Conservative manifesto...	X		X								X	
November 2008												
Scotland seeks satisfaction - citizen satisfaction, the Scot's approach	X	X	X		X		X				X	
London calling! Revisiting NI14 - a report from Tower 08.5	X	X	X	X		X	X				X	
Getting to Gemba - resorting to systems thinking	X	X		X	X	X						
Getting egged on! - Report from the EiP conference	X	X	X	X	X		X				X	
Satisfaction counts! - a newly discovered software supplier (and in the UK).		X	X		X		X					
California dreaming - an interesting paper from the USA		X	X		X	X						
Viewing the market - a brief look at system suppliers		X			X		X					Have you looked at callview? <hr/> Very Interesting Post, Thanks
Sayonara satisfaction - a link to another blog's visit to an amazing Japanese company		X		X	X	X					X	
Going critical! - Heidegger meets the IDeA	X	X		X								
Being insightful - a very brief review of the 'insight' report	X	X	X	X	X		X					
December 2008												
Citizen Engagement Exchange - a revision of the model	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	

NI14 back in the news? - some recent research	X	X	X	X	X		X				
Citizen or consumer - command & control? - David Marquand revisited	X	X	X	X	X						
NI 14 Paying the piper - more stuff on NI14!		X	X	X		X	X			X	
Activity based recharging - are we economic with the economics?			X		X	X				X	
Gartner - right again! More on metrics and engagement.	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
News from the USA - the Federal Web Managers' white paper		X	X	X	X					X	
NI14 - update to the guidance - 2 page update from the CabO	X	X			X		X			X	
Wise words from Oz - A new Australian e-government report		X	X	X	X						<p>This is interesting – thanks for reporting on it. I'm glad the Aussies have found that 'The internet is now the most common way people last made contact with government' because I think there is still a perception here that people overwhelmingly want to use the phone, which is not the case from our figures. I think this persistent misconception has been inhibiting investment in improving websites.</p> <p>As far as the contrast between our finding that the web is the least satisfactory channel and theirs that the phone is, that could be explained by a number of factors. I suspect that the local</p>

													government call centres our Socitm data comes from achieve a higher level of satisfaction than central government ones do (I have no evidence!). The results will also depend a lot on the question that was asked and who was asked.
Why bother? - a look back at the research	X	X	X	X	X								
January 2009													
How NOT to use feedback! Why the Minister is wrong.	X	X	X	X	X								<p>I don't like the idea in principle, but I've lost much sympathy for the GP surgeries and Primary Care Trusts. PCTs are still taking out newspaper adverts lying to us that we can book appointments in advance (useful for those of us who work and have not-urgent-yet problems), but if we call GPs to book an appointment, we're told that we can have one in the next 24 hours or must call back later. Sometimes "call back later" is the only option. You might remember that Tony Blair got a kicking on Question Time about this before the last election – and it's still happening today!</p> <p>So, I'd love a less-moderated feedback route, because the PCTs seem to be unhinged from reality. It's bad management, but it would be better than the current measurements.</p>

													But “switch to another practice”? Yeah, right! I’ve a choice of one, which was required to accept me by postcode, but is on the other side of the next-but-one village and 1h30 each way by public transport (it’s quicker to walk – if you can walk).
East or west, no-one answers! A report from China	X	X	X	X	X								
Having second thoughts! In support of Goodhart’s Law	X	X	X	X	X								
Honesty is the best policy! Statistics in the news			X		X								
Au Revoir NPM - A paper by Michael Duggett	X		X									X	
Co-production - a report from Compass	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Co-production - part 2 - an article in the latest Public Money & Management	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Behind the Vanguard - a new essay from Prof. John Seddon						X	X						
What have I just been saying? a recent academic paper from Surrey	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Accentuate the positive! the latest Accenture report	X	X	X	X	X							X	Fair point and I’d add that progress shown elsewhere in Whitehall, for example the POI review that you mention in another post, also shows a lack of joined up thinking within Whitehall.
February 2009													
Digital Britain - a new	X		X										Fair point and I’d add

report from DCMS and BERR												that progress shown elsewhere in Whitehall, for example the POI review that you mention in another post, also shows a lack of joined up thinking within Whitehall. This link explains some of the concerns that Open Rights Group has with the interim Digital Britain report.
The power of information - latest news from Steinberg, Vanguard, et al			X			X					X	
A good moan - a new piece on mycustomer.com	X	X		X			X				X	
S*d it! - a slave to the Internet	X	X										
Happy birthday - a homage to Charles & Abraham	X		X								X	
Get real Read! - Government IT gets it in the neck, again.			X								X	I completely agree with this post. Every penny of expenditure in our local authority has to be accounted for and is scrutinised and squeezed for savings. I have recently finished an efficiency exercise on Council IT spend and it was incredibly difficult to find savings. We did manage to achieve £1.7m of savings, but this was through a lot of hard work: contract renegotiations, consolidating offices so that expensive BT network and energy bills could be reduced,

												brush, which means that those that are already efficient suffer or are branded as a failure.
Oysters and pearls - creative dissatisfaction	X	X	X	X								
World Wide Web Consortium - news from nowhere		X	X		X							
A new post? - a vacancy at Whitehall			X	X							X	
Making contact with NI14 - update on the research and an online debate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
March 2009												
I Googled 'twitter' and 'e-government' - and found enlightenment, well almost!	X	X	X	X	X						X	I was there at one of the local launches of 'e-gov' in Manchester back in the early 2000's. I had dealt with the ICT developments in Local Authorities and seen GIS and Y2K as milestones in the profile of ICT as a real enabler of change for years prior to that. And authorities that wanted to decentralise, that did not have adequate data on line using middleware such as GIS, had to recentralise despite political ambitions not to. The rush to BVPI 157 and 100% online (no matter how we fudge the term 'on line') was another raising of the bar. And I agree that by failing to focus on process we got lost in the tree filled woods. And that means that the next big focus is BPR/WORK FLOW and

Complaining culture - turning complaints into an art form		X		X	X						X	
Get Carter - Ofcom versus Digital Britain	X	X	X	X								
Andrea strikes again - EU blue sky thinking	X		X	X	X						X	I agree with your points, but the glossy pages often set the scene for what's to come. In a more detailed analysis I am writing for Gartner clients I am looking at some of the sparkles of light emerging in the report. However I was not impressed with how it missed the big picture (which is what glossy reports should be about).
Laddering Participation - forty years on	X				X						X	
April 2009												
Social s(t)igma - another idea on MyCustomer.com		X		X	X	X					X	
What is e-government for? - Is just a channel or are we wanting to engage?	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Evidence base - latest Gerry McGovern blog		X	X	X	X	X					X	
Get satisfaction - more on satisfaction and pledges	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Good complaint handling - a 'how to' guide	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Great Emancipator II - the second annual survey	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	In response to David Rees's point, Roger Abbott from South Tyneside presented material at Socitm Insight's recent Learning from Better connected event (see http://www.socitm.gov.uk/socitm/Events/Learning+from+Better+connected

												services.
You can't win! - MP slags off DVLA		X	X	X								<p>I often use the improvements at DVLA with the Tax Disc process as an example of service redesign where (I assume) costs have been dramatically improved and the service has been improved. It's a nice counter to the argument that you can't have better service and lower costs.</p> <p>Anyone that still can't manage to display a valid tax disc probably shouldn't be driving or be an MP.</p>
A private sector experience - what we learnt on our holiday		X		X							X	
Operational efficiency - what can we read into the Treasury report?					X						X	<p>typical. the socitm kpi's are so well audited too – i can't imagine that anyone cheats on those (not admitting to it myself – we got burnt when we were honest and others were not).</p> <p>i hope it isn't doom and gloom news but suspect that, as with a lot of other government savings initiatives that this only brings bad news.</p>
May 2009												
What I'd expected - initial results from the survey		X	X	X	X		X					
Need and satisfaction - news from Chorley	X	X	X	X	X						X	
No place to be - the value of the Place	X	X	X	X	X		X				X	I agree – there should be less consideration of

survey?											spinning and promoting ourselves and more time spent understanding what matters to people and making it better. I also think that people have trouble differentiating between Central and Local Government – and in a sense why should they need to – and the sins of Westminster are reflected in the survey.
How to complain - another personal experience	X	X		X			X			X	
Off target - lots of moans about target regimes	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	<p>John Seddon suggested in a recent article that the Audit Commission be reined back to following the money. The removal the specification regime would save hundreds of millions, keep front-line jobs and free local authorities to innovate and improve instead of following targets, tick-boxes and other prescription.</p> <p>Read the initial letter from Seddon:</p> <p>http://www.lgcplus.com/5003845.article</p> <p>Read the attack from the AC:</p> <p>http://www.lgcplus.com/5004206.article</p> <p>And read the comments!:</p>

												http://www.lgcplus.com/finance-and-partnership/walker-v-seddon-the-debate-goes-on/5004313.article Blog to show your support for John.
Good Planning - what makes a good planning web site?			X	X	X	X						
Guidance & metrics - still not a lot of deep thinking...		X	X	X	X							
NI14 - the latest! IDeA keep us posted					X		X				X	
Complaining again - advice about complaints		X		X	X							
Citizen-consumers - digging in the library	X	X	X	X							X	
June 2009												
Expenses anyone? - a role for e-government			X	X								
Researchers in the dark - Parity in the press			X								X	
More on Parity - the report in the flesh	X	X	X	X		X					X	"Shopping online cannot and never will be the same as booking a hospital appointment. In the last two years I've made dozens of hospital appointments and even if you don't want it to be, its different than buying a CD" I really don't see the major difference. I buy contact lenses online – a shopping transaction whereby the supplier keeps my prescription between re-orders on my request. I can also book in for my regular (3 monthly) blood donations online ; though my local health

												department website is such a shambles, I generally don't bother. My young daughter broke her arm recently, and having gone through a process of several appointments, my general feedback (if I had been asked!) would be that I wanted more electronic interaction. For instance I got appointment dates confirmed by snail mail, but would have preferred email so I could copy & paste into my calendar. SMS reminders would have been useful as well. Funny thing is that every department seem to have different levels of capability to interact electronically
What shall we do? - a view from the week's events	X	X	X	X	X						X	
How many visitors? - discussing web site stats		X				X						
Digital self-exclusion - a new Ofcom report by Mori										X		[...] mit einer umfassenden Studie zum Thema Offliner und ihre Motivation (PDF), mit dem Thema Digital self-exclusion. Die Studie belegt seiner Meinung nach die Notwendigkeit non-digitale Kanäle zu Beteiligung [...]
Getting overfocused on the tools - wasting money?		X	X	X	X	X					X	I find this business of giving people "tools" so patronising. As you say, tools granted by gov aren't going to be effective and anyway,

												people prefer to create their own. It is just another ruse to disempower communities, who I hope will continue to forge tools for themselves. They could teach gov a thing – luckily! CONSultation, as it is fondly called in our borough in Richmond upon Thames, is thoroughly discredited. People use it only to ensure they can at least state in the comments box what they really want to say, but aren't given the option to do so!
Don't count on empowerment - a report from the CLG		X	X	X		X					X	
Watmore's wisdom - last words from the former CIO				X		X	X				X	
The Final Report - from Carter			X	X								
July 2009												
Return to Canada - after a trip to ECEG2009	X	X	X	X	X						X	
The Tory Take - considering things after an election	X	X	X	X							X	
Web 2.0 and benchmarking - more from Gartner	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	
Channel accounting - can we have a cost per channel?	X	X	X	X	X						X	I'd be interested in any figures on the cost of accepting/handling/processing cheques or cash. We charge our residents £2 for a Blue Badge and I've got a pet theory that it costs us more than £2 to accept/handle and process it – I'd love

												<p>some links to any research which may relate to this.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>One of the oddities is that many websites still funnel people to call rather than do transactions on the web. My insurance company does this; so I have to repeat name and complex policy numbers over the phone rather than just enter them on an online form.</p> <p>I recently had my car stolen; police websites advise people to report it in person to the local station or ring the local station rather than encourage people to use the web or even to call a call-centre. That leads to the cost of a person standing their to write down the details rather than just accept it electronically. I had to define locations in words; but could well have pointed to the location on a google map which would have helped with geo-spatial analysis.</p> <p>Even if it is fairly obvious that web is cheaper per transaction than phone which in turn is cheaper than face-to-face, I would still offer one</p>
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												caveat; the simplest less-interactive transactions such as yearly re-registering of my car can and do take place on the web. Its the more difficult edge cases ; (such as my stolen car) or similar that require more interaction and thus take place over the phone or face-to-face. Thus the type of transaction and complexity of the transaction may also impact the cost per transaction over different mediums.
Contrasting opinions - Who is right about Post Offices?		X	X	X		X					X	
Listening to the front line - a new report from the Cabinet Office	X	X	X	X		X					X	
Metrified - GovMetric go public	X	X		X	X	X					X	
Getting Techie - listening to Tim Berners-Lee			X								X	
World Class - yet another Cabinet Office report...	X		X	X		X					X	
New blogger on the street! John Suffolk joins the crowd	X	X	X	X	X						X	
August 2009												
Consuming ourselves - another McKinsey report starts some thinking	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	
Service quality and efficiency - MP's ask questions, again...			X		X	X					X	
Citizenomics - comparing costs and productivity			X		X	X					X	
Interim survey results - NI14 rather wasted on us	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	

Measuring the email mountain - Considering the President's inbox			X	X	X							1000 faxes per day? Unbelievable. And who are these 1000's of people that phone the president? e-mail I could understand, though I could just image that textual analysers might find that Viagra would be a topic of concern to people emailing Obama. Maybe some barriers to entry are a good thing. People who feel the need to contact the president should be inspired enough to have to print and pay to send snail mail.
Developing e-government - advice from India	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Foresight - a new report on the US	X	X	X	X	X							
Optimization Techniques - how customers measure	X	X	X	X	X							
Analysis Paralysis - IBM's latest idea	X	X	X	X							X	
Electronic government costs - in N.Ireland			X	X	X	X					X	
September 2009												
Effect of central on local - Is this what the CLG wants to hear?	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Mistaken conclusions - Demos barking up a wrong tree?		X									X	
Follow the leader - new report from the Sunningdale Institute	X	X	X	X							X	
Channel Strategy - news and views from the Cabinet Office	X	X	X	X							X	
In these hard times -			X	X							X	I guess my role and that

looking at the Tory alternative												of my colleagues in the early days involved trailblazing the concept of eGovernment and the broader use of technology, rather than supporting a particular choice of platform or vendor. If you think back ten years, choices were a little limited and Open Source was still very much in its infancy as an alternative. There's much more I could write on the subject quite happily but suffice to say that things could always have been done better with the benefit of hindsight! However, the end result has been broadly successful as I'm sure you may agree?
E-government dependencies - To Web 2.0 or not	X	X	X	X								X
Another survey - this one from the Oxford Internet Institute	X	X	X	X	X		X					X
US government web sites - a up-to-the-minute study	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X
Why we need to involve the "local" end users - not just "other" cultures	X	X	X	X	X	X						X
October 2009												
Engaged in the USA - some ways to approach citizens	X	X	X	X	X	X						X
Blogging about other bloggers' blogs - some lessons from history	X	X	X	X	X	X						X
E-governancing - why	X	X	X	X		X						X

Accenture agree with this blogger!												
Will e-government be different? - back to the academic literature on e-government	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Minister for e-government - Angela's back!			X									
Digital conclusion - Martha's report	X		X	X							X	
Beatcounters - beancounters getting it wrong?	X	X	X	X	X							<p>On the wall behind my desk I've got an article by Simon Caulkin entitled "Be efficient, please customers, cut costs...that's it"</p> <p>The problem with this is that the only one of those three that we can easily measure is the last one – so we measure it (and do we measure it!) and allow it to detract attention from the other two.</p>
User-centred approaches to e-Government - latest from the OECD	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Public service? - it's a culture thing!	X	X		X								
November 2009												
Disinfecting the swamp - thinking about "open gov"	X		X	X								
Foreseeing the future - the Q3 report from Foresee	X	X	X	X	X							<p>Thanks Mick, very useful link for my direct.gov.uk and dotgov.labs work</p> <p>cheers</p> <p>Rob</p>
Analogues of service - Kevin Carey in GC Magazine	X	X	X	X		X					X	I was very taken with this article too, particularly the second of these two paragraphs:

												but centre-driven tampering with the rules: if a new rule requires supplementary questions, a counter-productive (and measurable) cost is paid through added complexity to the form. If my kids can identify most things in the universe by asking twenty questions on a long car journey, it should be possible to make a just assessment of tax from a limited set of questions.
Citizen Issues - asking them what they think of service?	X	X	X	X	X		X					
Reasons to be cheerful - G2010 in the news	X	X	X	X							X	
Jobcentre + A qualitative analysis of the the dole offices	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	
E-Parliament - will it be virtually any better?	X		X	X								
E-government back in the news! - Malmo in the news			X	X							X	
Benchmarking the mire - Dissing Capgemini	X	X	X	X	X							
Happiness - is it the same as satisfaction?		X	X	X	X							
December 2009												
Back to academy - Papers by Winner and Hirschman	X		X	X							X	
Open strategy - leaking a leaked leak			X		X						X	
Don't get carried away - liberating the UK's mapping data?			X								X	Won't happen. OS will stall until new government comes in with plans to privatise OS. Even existing gov announced plans couple

- looking at a few methods												
January 2010												
Gov 2.0 again - a Christmas message from Andrea di Maio	X	X	X	X		X					X	
The case is adjourned - Philip Virgo's blog	X	X	X	X		X					X	
Social media analytics - Avinash Kaushik's thoughts on them		X	X	X	X			X				
Going native - what to do with social media natives?		X	X	X	X			X				
A new start - picking on Deloitte!	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	<p>For a systems perspective of why shared services increase costs whilst decreasing quality see:</p> <p>http://www.thesystemsthinkingreview.co.uk/index.php?pg=18&backto=1&twkstoryid=177</p> <p>-----</p> <p>A new start could also be easier if there was consolidation of local authorities and abolition of the Shire County layer. Some District Councils are too small to be unitaries and could be joined up for efficiencies. The downside is the reduction of posts for political activists. No political party is waving the flag for reform. The structure hasn't changed much since 1888. Reduce the number of MPs to match the number of local authorities and you may</p>

												<p>get better accountability in parliament.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Howard has saved me the trouble of quoting any systems thinking alternatives. As an example, and this is only from my own experience, I've found that since the reorganisation of HMRC into a back office 'factory' the quality of advice and assistance that is available has diminished.</p> <p>...oh and it's just occurred that one of the beneficiaries of outsourcing and developing shared services could be Deloitte's? Shurely Shome coincidence...</p>
Improving service - Socitm's turn to be picked on!	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	<p>In response to your comments on Socitm's website take up service, the results we published which received so much attention this past week are certainly not subjective.</p> <p>In promoting the results, we focussed on one key indicator – whether people were able to find and do what they wanted to on their council's website. A quarter of all councils use the Website take up service and in the month reported, September</p>

consume information												
Going continental - Pan-European E-services	X	X	X	X								
The final edition? - Government ICT Strategy	X	X	X								X	
February 2010												
Social Media News - it's there on the news stands		X	X					X				
Satisfaction levels out - the latest Foresee report		X	X	X	X	X					X	
Social media as a channel - a report from Right Now		X	X					X				
Accountability - a report from Localis		X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
The engagement ethic - a report from the Innovation Unit	X	X	X	X		X					X	
Passive democracy - The Hansard Society considers social media	X	X	X					X			X	
New Horizons - when is e-government achieved?		X	X		X	X		X			X	
Transparency - web site transparency equates to trust in government?	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Low usage of e-services - a tale from Korea		X	X	X	X	X						
Smarter public services - IBM advertises in New Statesman!		X	X	X		X					X	
March 2010												
Crossroads - where we're at with e-democracy	X	X	X	X	X			X			X	
Digital participation - following on from Digital Britain	X		X								X	
Poor relations - broadband coverage in USA not dissimilar to UK	X		X		X						X	
Community work - a report from PwC and the IPPR	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Democratic participation			X	X								

- An academic view of e-participation in the EU.												
Varieties of Participation - a paper by Fung	X		X	X							X	
What really matters - another Accenture report	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	
Tailored technology - thoughts from CIO's in the USA	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	
Social mediating - another report from NESTA	X	X	X	X	X				X			
Focus not thrills - Andrea di Maio and Martha Lane Fox	X	X	X	X							X	
Cultural shift - Ipsos MORI and the new Total Place report	X	X		X	X						X	
A week in politics - burying NI14 and resurrecting the E-government Unit?	X		X	X		X	X				X	<p>NI14 – Gone!</p> <p>Good times! – Ill conceived, poorly understood. Must have been responsible for the sale of more CRM systems than any other bright idea.</p> <p>=====</p> <p>===</p> <p>Hi Mick,</p> <p>I have just come across your blog by chance and will be following it regularly in the future. You may recall that we spoke about e-government a few years ago now.</p> <p>I have also blogged this week about the PM's announcement about the semantic web, although my contribution is from the perspective of the systems community</p>

												outside government. http://innovationandenterprise.blogspot.com/
April 2010												
April fool - wondering who Sir Peter is working for now?			X								X	
NI14 is dead, long live parsimony! - promoting the model	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Staring across the pond - comparative US and UK views			X								X	
Be my muse - pondering automated social media and Gov 2.0								X				
The twittering parties - Hansard Society and Sitemorse publications			X	X								<p>With the exception of a few the majority of MPs and their staff don't get IT.</p> <p>I don't think they know enough about the internet to use it as the valuable tool it could be in this election. You only have to watch the televised debates on the digital economy bill and look at the result to know what a pack of dinosaurs they are.</p> <p>just sayin.</p> <p>=====</p> <p>===</p> <p>Another Hansard Society publication might answer your call for a random street poll... the latest Audit of Political engagement asks some of these questions and shows that 4% of the general electorate follow a politician on Facebook and 2% on Twitter.</p>
Web (ab)users - some thoughts on usability and accessibility	X	X	X	X		X						

Lost in Spain - literally									X	
E-government and sex – first report about Ethicomp 2010			X	X	X					
<p>Dear e-mancipator</p> <p>nice to have feedback from this paper.</p> <p>I certainly agree that the data is always a serious issue in social research (I need to clarify here that my data are syrvey data published annually by Eurostat).</p> <p>I find the fact that the Gender Digital Divide does not vanish over the years (or in the most developed countries of Western Europe) quite alarming and I believe that sociologists may have much to say on that.</p> <p>It is time to examine the impact of technology as it is, not through the lences of our optimism. I think a study of Easten Europe has much to offer in our understanding. If we look at another technological culture without any prejudice we may be surprised of how many things we don't know.</p> <p>I think that sometimes it is useful to analyse our data without making any normative assessment (given of course that we use the right data).</p> <p>Please don't hesitate to contact me for any</p>										

												comments or suggestions (my contact details are on the University of Oxford web-page)
E-government and the volcano – could e-government have made life easier	X	X	X	X		X						
Keeping mum – social media and the election			X	X				X				<p>A different way of framing the question – but much harder to measure – is to look at the second and third order effects:</p> <p>how far do online conversations influence offline conversations?</p> <p>how far do online conversations influence conventional media coverage and/or politicians' behaviour in ways which in turn influence offline conversations?</p> <p>Or to put it a bit differently, are we looking for signs that social media are a primary driver of change, or that they act as catalyst for change?</p>
E-government united – the UN report finally appears			X	X	X							
May 2010												
Efficiency savings -						X					X	
What's the use of benchmarks...		X	X	X	X							
What's the use of satisfaction?		X	X	X	X						X	
E-election mania			X	X				X				Thank you for the interesting post! It summarises all that I

												was looking for 😊 You might be interested in my survey if you haven't seen it yet: http://www.unipark.de/uc/ER_UniErlangen_Zeh_LS/b762
Semantic, semantics			X								X	
Multi-channel engagement	X	X	X	X								
Multi-channel engagement - part 2			X	X								
Multi-channel engagement – part 3	X	X	X	X								
Good government	X	X	X	X								
Europe calling!			X	X								It is certainly shocking the Digital Agenda, at least regarding with eGovernment matters. No word about OpenGov, contradictory messages about e-ID and, on top of all, the objective of having eGov services supporting IPv6. It would have been something good to realise on April Fool Day!!
To the e-barricades!			X	X								
Voice of the Customer		X	X	X	X			X				
Who leads Gov 2.0			X	X								
June 2010												
Horses for courses		X	X	X	X			X				
Adios CAA					X							
The paradigm tap	X	X	X	X								
Researching digital government			X									
UN-decided	X		X	X	X							
Opening the vaults			X									
Scots wae hae	X	X	X	X	X							
Not bovered	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	
Island of dreams			X	X								
Building the better web site		X	X	X	X							
Holiday reading			X	X								
Governing electronically	X		X	X								

Annex 13 – Customer feedback management application business case

BUSINESS CASE

Name of the Project
Customer Feedback Management
Reasons for undertaking the Project
<p>Currently the Council has no mechanism for understanding customer satisfaction and collating feedback across all its service delivery channels, this also applies to National Indicator 14 (avoidable contact), which was collected and collated manually for the initial two weeks of the exercise, which will need to be repeated on at least one further occasion.</p> <p>The Council currently measures satisfaction and gets feedback from customers accessing services through the web site via the Socitm's Web Site service. The statistics will assist the Customer Services Manager in compiling and reporting on a number of statistics. We are currently unable to provide the required performance information for NI 14, satisfaction rates or channel migration to the "Connect Partnership" as we do not have the facility to record it.</p> <p>More detailed customer feedback on accessing services through the web site can then be used to improve this access channel for the services.</p> <p>If this approach was used for all service areas across the key channels (face-to-face and 'phone) we would be able to gain a better understanding of the differences expectation and satisfaction of customer using different methods to access the same services.</p> <p>This understanding could be used to prioritise our resources when delivering customer services and encourage users to channel shift to cheaper access channels such as self-service on the Internet and provide customer feedback to continually improve services.</p> <p>The migrating of customers to cheaper service channels will be necessary to support the wider efficiency drive within RDC, which needs to save circa £1m over the next 3 years.</p> <p>The customer insight generated by measuring cross-channel satisfaction will assist the Customer Services Manager with business improvement activities.</p>
Options which have been considered
<p>A number of suppliers of systems in the private sector but the main ones in the public sector are:</p> <p>a) rol, supplier of GovMetric – implementation £xxxx including one kiosk for face-to-face visitors. Annual fee £xxxx</p>

b)CMetrix (recent start-up by developers from rol)– offer similar but more flexible solution than GovMetric. £xxx /month, no obligations £xxx. = Special short-term offer =A suitable Asus EEE 15.6inch touch-screen laptop for use at reception costs £xxx.

Scarborough BC has recently started using Cmetrix and the shared experience should be valuable.

Expected Benefits

Greatly reducing the costs of manually collating and reporting customer satisfaction and transaction data – including equalities data.

Supporting channel optimisation and assisting channel migration with users encouraged to shift to less expensive (for the council) channels.

Increase staff moral, at a time of change, by making teams more aware of positive feedback on their service.

To allow all service areas to have LPIs (Local Performance Indicators) that show customer satisfaction across service channels. These LPIs can feed into service reviews and be used for continuous improvement.

To promote healthy internal competition between services areas to provide the best service through the most effective channels.

Eliminating the costs of manually collating and reporting National Indicator 14 (Avoidable Contact) and enabling easier analysis to develop actions to reduce avoidable contact.

Ability to report/benchmark through the North Yorkshire “Connect Partnership”

Summary of key risks

if the data gathered from customers is not employed to improve services then the effort and expense is wasted.

If the system and methodology is not corporately adopted and rolled out enterprise wide, then the full return on investment cannot be realised.

These risks can be mitigated against by ensuring there is a full corporate roll out of this system across all service areas and service channels and that the feedback forms part of the Council’s performance structure and action planning within the PMS(Coalent). Doing this will ensure actions are taken and these can be fed back to customers to assure them that their input has contributed toward transforming the service.

There is a risk that without accurate information on customer flow and foot fall though each service and channel decisions will be taken that do not offer VFM, i.e. making changes that are not cost effective due to the number of

customers involved.

This risk can be militated against by ensuring that accurate information on through flow/footfall is used in conjunction with channel/satisfaction information.

Estimated Costs

Assuming that the Cmetrix solution is adopted –

For year one it is envisaged that the £xxx/month funding could be drawn from the web management budget (£xxx in total for the year). In addition, touch screens will need to be purchased where required at a cost of approximately £xxx each.

Following monitoring of the impact of the tool, it would either be turned off or used to replace the Socitm web take-up service (saving £xxx) and it is hoped the cost spread across the services involved. The service also includes a survey design package which may go some way to improving on the use of Google surveys, whilst ultimately replacing SNAP as a survey tool, at a further potential cost saving.

Estimated timescales

By...

15 Nov Approve Business Case and procure

30 Nov All reps identified and buy-in from service areas.

30 Dec embedded in webpages and forms.

30 Dec Touch screens in offices and One Stops (subject to finance)

31 Jan Fully rolled out for Customer Services through all channels

28 Feb all service area postal surveys transferred to system and delivered through most effect means.

15 Mar reports available to feed into LPIs

15 Mar NI14 using Mavis

30 April Project Appraisal and formal close down or continuation.

Author/Date

23October 2009.